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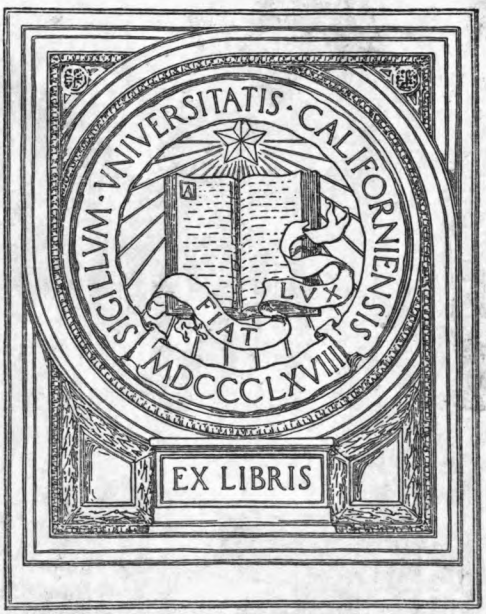

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THE

NOVICE

OF

SAINT DOMINICK.

BY

MISS OWENSON,

AUTHOR OF ST. CLAIR,

For *Truth* and *Good* are one;
And Beauty dwells in them, and they in her,
With like participation. *Akenside.*

Forse se tu gustasse anco una volta,
La milissima parte delle Geoje,
Che gusto un core amato riamando,
Aireste repentita Sospirando,
Perdutto e tutto il tempo,
Che, in amor non se spenda. *Tasso.*

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1806.

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THE

NOVICE OF ST. DOMINICK.

CHAP. I.

Can you speak Greek?
No certainly! Get you gone then,
And talk of stars, and firmaments, and firedrakes.
Do you remember who was Adam's schoolmaster,
And who taught Eve to spin? She knows all these,
And will run you all over the world
As familiar as a fidler.—
Can you sit seven hours together and say nothing?
Which she will do, and when she speaks
Speaks oracles: speaks things that no man
Understands; no, nor herself either.

BEAUMONT and FLETCHER.

THE sharp reproof of the pious and learned lady Magdelaine de Montmorell still shone on her keen eye, though it had ceased to murmur on her lip. The little amanuensis received it in silence, hung her head, and sighed—she dared not weep. One solitary intrusive tear alone

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had escaped from her eye; and glittered on the glowing surface of her cheek, like the dew-drop which the power of repulsion scarcely suffers to embalm the bosom of the rose it spangles. The little amanuensis brushed it lightly off with the feather of her pen, and waited in patient silence till the inspirations of the lady Magdelaine should again command its efforts.

The lady Magdelaine had already spent four years in composing a voluminous History of the Crusades, whether foreign or domestic, against infidel or apostate, from the first instigation of Peter the Hermit in 1104 to the massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572; of the latter she had herself been a witness. She had retired from Paris to the chateau de Montmorell, which rose on the northern skirts of the forest of Champagne, as a residence more appropriate to the pursuits of one who expected to unite the heathen reputation of an Anna de Commines with the holy fame of a Saint Geneviève: and solitude and a total seques-

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tration from the world, together with the convent-library of the Dominican sisters (then rich in legendary lore and pious tradition), gave boundless scope to the profound meditations of philosophy, and favoured the deep researches of history; and while, with kindling ardour, fanaticism traced the recorded horrors of religious frenzy in the gloomy "deeds of other times," France still groaned under the struggling efforts of religious prejudice, or bled beneath the uplifted sword of civil dissension.

It was on the eve of St. Theodora the Martyr, and a few days after Henry the Fourth had invested Neufchatel, that a later hour than usual still found the lady Magdelaine in her study, dictating to her young secretary the most remarkable circumstances of the siege of Beziers, where six thousand obstinate heretics were put to the sword in cold blood, and four hundred committed to the flames, for the *love of God*. It was a note panegyrical and elu-

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cidatory on this instance of religious ardour, which had drawn from the horror-struck amanuensis (a young novice of the order of St. Dominick) such animadversions as seldom failed to elicit the disapprobation of her patroness, and rouse every feeling of pious zeal into action. It was some time ere the lady Magdelaine could rally back that abstracted attention which the unanswerable, but not unreproved, comments of the little secretary had put to flight. A glance into a page of the seraphic doctor, St. Bonaventure, restored the train of her dissipated ideas; and, determined to finish her note with an animated apostrophe, she exultingly exclaimed: "Oh! fortunate "though deluded creatures, who by the "pious zeal of your holy persecutors "were forced to return to the fold from "whence you strayed!"—"And did they "return, madam?" interrupted the novice, "to the faith they had abjured?"—"They "were all put to death without distinc- "tion," said the lady Magdelaine. "Kill

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"away, cried the bishop of Citeaux, "God will take care of his own!"— "Then what became of the bishop of "Citeaux?" demanded the secretary.

The lady Magdelaine, again immersed in a learned puzzle; made no reply, but cast up her eye, pinched the folds of her ruff, and bit her nails, in vain endeavours to lure back the truant and felicitous thought which was to round the period of her apostrophe: and while the brain of learned dullness in vain gave the torture to exhausted memory, the vivid thought of genius darted through regions of impossibility, and pursued with ardour the glowing phantoms of fancy's creation. And thine was a genius, young Novice of St. Dominick, that soared far beyond the occupation allotted thee: and thine was an age when the mastery of the attention is seldom obtained; when the mind will admit an image or embrace an idea wholly foreign from the pursuit in which it is engaged, because it steals on its apprehen-

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sion under the glowing form of joys anticipated, or wears the pensive, grateful semblance of joys elapsed: happy age!

The brain of the lady Magdelaine still pursued with unwearied diligence the learned trifle that distracted it, while the vagrant fancy of the little amannensis wandered through scenes of fairy reflection. And never did a strain breathe in stronger unison to a soft and fanciful idea than that which stole on the rapt attention of the young secretary, as, tracing viewless characters with the feather of her pen, she

> "gave to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name."

The storm raged loud, yet in every intervening pause the melodious tones of a harp were more distinctly heard. Panting and breathless, the Novice arose, crept softly to the casement, raised herself on a small stool, and flung an inquiring glance through its painted sash; but the stained and narrow panes, lit up by the watery,

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beams of a declining moon, gave no form to her eager eye, except that of an ancient dame of the family de Montmorell praying with sympathetic piety before the faded figure of her lord in armour.

Yet if her eye was ungratified by the sight of the musician, her ear more distinctly caught the strain, which at first faintly breathed at a distance, now lingered on every passing breeze, now directly ascended from the terrace beneath the casement, and now, gradually fading away, became lost amid the loud howling of the wind.

Rapt, entranced, the little amanuensis still remained at the casement, even long after the magic spell which had lured her thither was dissolved; while fancy still fed her ear with those tones which distance or the storm had lulled into silence, and amazement was busied in assigning a cause for an effect so singular, so delightful. But even fancy at last ceased to delude; and Imogen, with a sigh of disappointment, re-

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turned to her seat at the moment when the lady Magdelaine, starting from hers, exclaimed, " I must consult the bishop of " Beauvais."

" Did you not hear the sound of " music, madam?" demanded Imogen.— " Music!" said the lady Magdelaine, mechanically speaking the word with a tone and air of abstraction that denoted her absence of her mind and her inattention to the demand.

" To me it breathed no human sound," said the amanuensis, " but such as fancy " gives to those aërial strains which waft " the souls of dying saints to heaven. " In good sooth, it thrilled upon my heart: " e'en now methinks I hear it."—" What?" demanded the lady Magdelaine, awakening.—" Hush! I am not deceived. Yet " methinks 'tis in the castle: it steals " along the corridor; do you not hear it, " madam?"

The lady Magdelaine (whose auricular faculties were somewhat less acute than

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those of her companion) now for the first time heard those strains which had awakened raptures beneath the steady tenor of her philosophic mind: they had indeed awakened emotions of a very different nature; and, advancing to a distant part of the chamber, she drew back a sliding door, which opened on the corridor that surrounded the servants' hall. The grand-dame of the present lady de Montmorell had constructed this door for the purpose of obtaining secret information of all the politics of her domestic system. The lady Magdelaine, whose imagination was less on the *qui vive?* than that of her young secretary, readily believed that these mysterious strains were not only of human sound, but that they proceeded from some unlicensed merriment in her domestics; and now appropriated the sliding-door to a purpose it had served, for two generations back, to the ladies de Montmorell. Instantly the tones of a harp, accompanied by a fine voice, interrupted by repeated and loud bursts of laughter,

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arose from the great hall below. Imogen, followed by the lady Magdelaine, sprung forward; and, hanging over the balustrade, with a heart beating in unison to the lively air which had awakened its palpitation, observed the musician surrounded by a group who paid the tribute of boisterous applause to the talents he exerted for their entertainment. Followed by the reluctant and delighted Imogen, the lady Magdelaine, with noiseless step, returned in silence to her study, closed the slide, and rung with some violence the little silver bell which lay on her table; but no ready page obeyed the summons. "Theodore may be asleep," said Imogen timidly; contemplating the storm that gloomed the countenance of the lady Magdelaine, and threatened a temporary overthrow to her philosophy; "shall "I go and awaken him, madam?"

The lady Magdelaine, in sullen silence, took a taper, and proceeded to the antichamber. Before the dying embers of a wood fire, stretched at his full length, lay

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the young page, who had read himself to sleep over the Romance of the Rose. "Why, thou mortal Morpheus!" exclaimed the lady Magdelaine in a Stentorian voice. The youth, roused by the well-known tone, started on his feet, rubbed his eyes, scratched his head, bowed, and stammered. "Say," continued his lady, "wouldst thou "emulate the drowsy powers of Epime- "nides, and sleep away thy useless life?" —"So please my lady, I thought"— "You thought! But every vassal now "arrogates the divine faculty of thinking. "Bethink thee then of delivering my "commands to those rioters who by such "rude wassailage disturb the nocturnal "meditations of their lady."

The page, scarce half awakened, stood motionless and gaping. "Avaunt!" said the lady Magdelaine, "and summon to "my presence that hoary reveller, the sieur "Ambrose." The page trembling, bowing, and yawning, went to seek the *maître d'hotel*; and the lady Magdelaine returned,

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to her study, where Imogen was still listening to those sounds which found admittance through an aperture in the sliding door. "For twenty years," said the lady Magdelaine, throwing herself into her chair, "for twenty years the sound of ill-managed "mirth, or rude merriment, has not been "heard till this night within the walls of "de Montmorell!"—"I can well believe "it," sighed Imogen.—"I shall soon "learn who this modern Orpheus is," continued her ladyship.

"So shall I, I hope," said Imogen.

"I should not wonder if it was a spy of "that arch heretic the king of Navarre," exclaimed lady Magdelaine.

"I should have no objection though it "were," thought Imogen.

"The province is full of his emissaries "and his troops," said the lady Magdelaine.

"Heaven prosper the hero in all his un-"dertakings!" silently ejaculated Imogen.

"The Leaguers," added the lady Magdelaine, "are dilatory in their operations;

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" while they should recollect, that during " the Trojan wars, and those carried on " by the Greeks against Darius and " Xerxes,—" Here the entrance of the maître-d'hotel, followed by the greater part of the domestics of the chateau, interrupted the learned harangue of the lady Magdelaine. The young page, peevish for having been awakened from a delicious dream (which placed him first page of the presence to queen Margaret de Valois) in a manner not likely to reward him for the loss of so pleasing a delusion, and disappointed at having missed the entertainment he found his fellow-servants enjoying, delivered his lady's orders with such exaggerating additions of her displeasure, that old Ambrose, who dared not singly encounter her wrath, had prevailed on some of the domestics to share the punishment as they had shared the pleasure of the crime.

The appearance of the maître-d'hotel revived the sparks of anger which the di-

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gression of the lady Magdelaine from the king of Navarre to the Trojans, Greeks, and Persians, had nearly extinguished; and after a pause of a minute she exclaimed, in a tone of reprehension and solemnity: "When the peaceful influence of Morpheus, so finely described by Homer, should spread the pinions of repose o'er the eyes of mortals, save those spirits of higher order, who by the lamp's pale beam pore over the inspirations of departed genius, or raise amidst the silence of midnight gloom monuments to perpetuate their own, say, what means this nocturnal wassailage within the walls of the chatean de Montmorell? It is to thee, thou hoary president of midnight revelry, I address myself."—"*I!* good my lady," stammered Ambrose; "with my lady's good pleasure, the saints are witness, I never was a president: the Virgin forbid I should ever be a president!"

"Say," continued the lady Magdelaine,

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"do you celebrate the orgies of the "household gods, perform ye Bacchanalian "mysteries, or hold you the riotous "Saturnalia?" The servants, in silent and ignorant amazement, stared in each others' faces. "Speak," continued the lady Magdelaine, "who is this insidious "promoter of midnight revelry, this Am-"phion, this Terpander, who, like the "musicians of old, has charmed e'en "stocks and stones?"

"So please my lady," said Ambrose, bowing, "he is no trepanner, but a poor min-"strel, a troubadour of Provence *, who "erst-while begged shelter at the postern-"gate from the storm, in the name of our "Lady of the Snow. Marry, an it had been "a dog one's bowels would have yearned "to turn him adrift o'such a night."

"*Troubadour!*" repeated the lady Mag-

* "Au sein de cette barbarie naquirent en Provence, nos premiers poëtes, connus sous le nom du Troubadour." *Histoire de France, Louis Jeune*, chap. 7.

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delaine: "O thou second Cymon, thou "more stupid than Polyphemus! When "heresy stalks abroad, and threatens our "holy faith with destruction; when anarchy "and civil war tear the very bosom of our "country; are we to admit into the very "*sanctum sanctorum* of our chateau every "Hugunot spy who assumes the disguise "of an itinerant votarist of Apollo? This "minstrel, this troubadour, may be the "very spirit of Luther, under the power "of transmigration; it may be heterodoxy "personified; it may be Satan himself "roaming about, and seeking, in these "irreligious times so favourable to his "reign, all those whom he may devour." The servants crossed themselves devoutly; all but the little Beatrice, who had the honour to preside over the tapestry-looms of the lady Magdelaine.

"Satan!" repeated Beatrice: "in good "sooth, my lady, he looks more like an "angel than a devil, saints keep us!"

"Peace, shameless Bacchante!" ex-

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claimed the lady Magdelaine: "and thou, "monsieur Ambrose, stop this min- "strelsy, and instantly dismiss this modern "Arion."—"Poor youth!" said Ambrose: "St. Denis be his speed! for it blows "a piteous storm, and the night is as "black as pitch."

"Youth!" reiterated Imogen; "youth! "is he young? I thought all troubadours "and minstrels were old and blind, with "long and flowing beards."—"Made- "moiselle, he has no more beard than my "hand, save indeed as handsome a pair of "whiskers"—"As any cavalier in the "province of Champagne might wish to "wear," added Beatrice. "Blind, for- "sooth! Marry, if there is such another "pair of black eyes in France I'll give my "silver reliquary for a copper sous!"

"Beatrice," said the lady Magdelaine, "dost thou not fear the fate of Canente, "who was changed into a voice for talk- "ing too much?"

"*She!* good my lady," said Ambrose;

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" beshrew me if she fears any thing, not " excepting the devil, father Anselm, or " your ladyship. I told the damsels it was " not seemly to press round the youth as " they did."—" Marry, didst thou so, mon- " sieur Propriety," interrupted Beatrice; " but did you consider then, that it was so " long since we saw any thing young and " handsome in the chateau, that we came " to look at him, not as a man, but a " wonder!"—" Beatrice," said the lady Magdelaine, in a softened tone, " it is " easy to perceive you are not of the " Pythagorean school; but"—" She at " school!" said Ambrose; " Mass! she " would corrupt a nunnery!"—" But the " question is," continued the lady Mag- delaine, " whether this musical Adonis " should be dismissed, or retained a pri- " soner till the return of the father direc- " tor, who is gone to shrive the ladies of " St. Dominick?"—" Poor dear souls!" said Beatrice: " I wonder what they can " have to confess, shut up all their lives in

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"a convent; for my part, who only live "in an old chateau, a little sin goes a "great way with me."

"What if I were to see him myself?" said the lady Magdelaine, addressing Imogen. "He is evidently insidious, and con-"sequently dangerous: if he is, as I sus-"pect, a spy,—Yes, I will see him; and "let him, if he can, elude the eye of "Argus' penetration; yes, I will at least "hear what he has to say."—"Say, my "lady!" cried Beatrice; "hear what he "has to sing. Do, good my lady, get "him to sing 'the Merry Knight and the "Maid in the Vestment of Blue.' Holy "rosary, I thought I should have split my "sides with laughing!"—"Beatrice," said the lady Magdelaine, mildly, "sacrifice, "I pr'ythee, to the goddess Muta: and "thou, Ambrose, conduct this minstrel to "my presence."

Ambrose retired with a bow of triumph: the domestics exchanged looks of pleasur-able amazement, and expectation flushed

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its beams in the bright eyes of Imogen. "Theodore," cried the lady Magdelaine; "bring in fresh tapers. Imogen, give me "my veil. Beatrice, Blanche, and Agnes, "retire to the back-ground." Then, having arranged her fardingale, settled the folds of her ruff, and adjusted her veil after the manner of Paulina, the emperor Nero's mistress, she waited in an attitude of solemn dignity to receive her eleemosynary guest. In a few minutes he appeared, led in by Ambrose. He bowed low, but not servilely; and, resting the end of his harp on his right foot, stood in an attitude rather dignified than humble.

His stature rose to that commanding height which fancy attaches to the idea of majesty, and possessed that graceful slightness and flexibility which characterize youth in its first dawn of manhood: the contours of his face were conformable to the most perfect line of Roman beauty; and the grand, the noble expression of his countenance, evinced a soul where "no dark deed wan-

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"dered in secret;" it flashed the vivid emanations of genius, blended with the glowing affections of the man and the ardent spirit of the hero.* His garb was that usually worn in those days by the professors of minstrelsy: a robe of dark-green, gathered at the neck with a small gorget beneath the snowy folds of his ruff, and incircled round the waist with a crimson cadis girdle; the sleeves, slashed off from the elbow, fell to the ground, and discovered those of his doublet of black velvet, fastened at his wrist with silver clasps; a scarlet ribbon fell from his neck, from which was suspended his harp, scarcely larger than a lyre; from his girdle hung a chain, to which was fastened a splendid escutcheon; and his curling

* See the curious account of the appearance of a minstrel, who was introduced at Kenelworth castle, among many other devices and *shows* represented before queen Elizabeth, at an entertainment given her by lord Leicester.

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glossy black hair defined the form of a head which was that of a youthful Alcibiades.

The lady Magdelaine started, gazed, and remained for more than a minute lost in silent admiration of the form that presented itself at the door of her study. Then, suddenly breaking into an abrupt exclamation, and resuming her air of awful deportment, she said: "Speak, "young stranger, whose garb and seeming "tell thee of that order fast falling to de- "cay; whence and what art thou, who "darest thus boldly to intrude at this un- "seasonable hour upon the peaceful se- "curity of our castle, and insidiously to "practise on the simple ignorance of our "domestics?"

"Lady," said the stranger, with a bow low and graceful, "I meant not to intrude, but to solicit; not to practise on ignorance, but to interest humanity."

"Who and what art thou?" repeated the lady Magdelaine.—"By birth, lady,

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" a Provençal, by profession a minstrel,
" by necessity a wanderer, and by senti-
" ment a citizen of the world. The ge-
" nius of my country found me, while yet
" a boy, tuning my rustic reed on the deli-
" cious banks of the Durance; and taught
" me to raise my humble lay, and emulate
" the bards of my native province, who dif-
" fused the light of poetry and song o'er the
" wide dominions of France, then involved
" in Gothic darkness. I obeyed. Thrice
" have I carried off the golden violet * at
" Thoulouse from my competitors; thrice
" have I crossed the Rhone, and sung
" through the wide domains of France the
" superiority of my native province, its

* In 1323 the society of Troubadours at Thoulouse sent circular letters to the Languedocian poets, to come and read *their* works, with the promise of a *golden violet* to him who should compose the best romance. Clemence d'Isaure left a sum by her will to be laid out in three golden violets, which the academy of Thoulouse was to dispose of as the reward of superior genius.

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" meads for ever verdant, its purple vine-
" yards, its fertilizing streams, and snowy
" flocks. I have raised a nobler strain, and
" sung the prowess of the warrior, the im-
" mortality of the hero: and erewhile, O
" dangerous theme! I have stolen inspira-
" tion from the eye of beauty, and sung the
" charms of woman, and the omnipotent
" power of love. This night, the wandering
" spirit of my profession conducted me to
" the forest de Montmorell, my better des-
" tiny to the portals of the castle, and (oh!
" suffer me to hope it) my guardian angel
" into the presence of its fair and noble lady."

The minstrel again bowed, as he finished his recital; and the lady Magdelaine, with a contortion of the muscles that softened her harsh countenance into some faint indication of a smile, replied:

" Young stranger, I doubt not the ve-
" racity of thy relation, although I do not
" pretend to possess the gift of that god-
" dess who could discover the most plau-
" sible falsehood by a look. Neither am I

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" ignorant of the reverence in which thy " sacred profession was held by the an- " cients: the king Alcinous is described " by Homer as paying the highest honors " to his inspired visitor; Ulysses, that wary " chief, treated with profound respect the " tuneful Dimodocus; the Athenians sent " a minstrel to command the Spartans, " who conquered under his inspiring in- " fluence; Anacreon was caressed at the " court of Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos; " and so great was the reverence paid by " the ancient Arabs to their bards, that " their entrance into the cities was hailed " with public rejoicings, and the best " poet was rewarded with a rich robe, a " fine horse, and a beautiful damsel."

" Oh, that I were an Arabian bard!" exclaimed the minstrel with *naïveté*, and glancing his eye to the back of lady Magdelaine's chair, where hovered the airy form of Imogen; then, after a moment's

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indulgence, fixed his eyes on the earth, and sighed.

The lady Magdelaine, who had arrested the impassioned glance half-way ere it had reached its point of destination, construed its expression according to the surmise of her vanity rather than her pride, and after a moment's silence added :

" But though I were not to acknowledge " the claim thy inspired profession should " always have on all true lovers of the muses, " yet the law of hospitality (never violated " in the chateau de Montmorell) would " secure thee an asylum for a night such " as this (which might have served Virgil " as a model for his celebrated Storm); else " should I have read Eustatius to very little " purpose, who treats so diffusely on the " duties of hospitality. I consign thee " therefore, young stranger, to the care of " my maître-d'hotel, and to morrow thou " shalt receive an audience of leave." The

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minstrel pressed his right hand to his heart; and, with a bow of profound and grateful acknowledgment, was retiring, followed by the domestics; the door was fast closing; when, in a tone of hesitation, the lady Magdelaine exclaimed: "Yet stay, young "stranger; I"——She paused: the minstrel respectfully returned. "I would "know thy name," said the lady Magdelaine. The minstrel hesitated, riveted his eyes on the head of his harp, and, after a moment's silence, eagerly replied, "I "am called Orlando, lady."

"Bearest thou no other name?"

"Nope, lady. A deserted foundling, "my infant years were supported by the "pastor of the village of Beauvoisin; "and my latter life was devoted to the "monks of the Petits Augustins, whose "flocks I tended on the banks of the "Durance."

"By the arms suspended from thy girdle, "thou hast filled some higher station than

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" that of tending the flocks of a con-
" vent."

" True, lady; I was for some time chief
" minstrel to the baron de Montargis,
" whose chateau is bathed with the blue
" waves of the Durance."

" Then thou served a heretic, and a
" rebel to a just cause."

" 'Tis true, lady; he denied the infalli-
" bility of the pope, the omnipotence of
" the saints, and the justice of the claims
" of the Leaguers. 'Tis some time since I
" left him, in search of a better service."

" Which may fortune bless thee withal!"
said the lady Magdelaine; " thou may'st
" now retire."

The minstrel obeyed.

" And will you not, sweet my lady,"
said Beatrice, who with Agnes still loitered
behind, " will not you hear him play one
" little madrigal? Marry, he knows all
" the ballads of Rollo, not to mention the
" tragic adventures of the baron de Coucy,

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" and the fair lady de Vitry; and rounde-
" lays, sequidills, and musettes, without
" end: else is he a youth of no faith; for
" all these did he promise me, in very
" truth; besides the pleasant and curious
" tragedy, full of rare device, of the amo-
" rous shoemaker, who put himself to
" death with his own cutting-knife, all for
" love of a beautiful damsel of high de-
" gree. Do, sweet my lady, permit the
" minstrel to return; the night is yet
" young."—"Beatrice," said the lady Mag-
delaine, in a tone of hesitation, " thou
" dost not consider it would be unseemly
" for thy lady to hold further converse with
" this young stranger. Times are now
" greatly changed since Charlotte of Savoy
" kissed the sleeping poet Alain Chartier,
" and was thought not the worse for it.
" It is not the man (said she) whom I kiss,
" but the lip from whence flowed so many
" charming strains."—" But then, dear my
" lady: kissing a man, and listening to his

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" song; marry, there is a huge difference!"
" —Not to the eye of unimpassioned philo-
" sophy, Beatrice; for though I were to ho-
" nour this young bard with a chaste salute,
" or lend an ear to his inspired strains, it
" would still be but the homage of genius
" to its kindred spirit."

" Then shall I call him back, lady?"

" No, Beatrice, not to-night: the taste-
" ful propensities of the poetess must not
" be indulged at the expence of the dig-
" nity of the lady de Montmorell."

" Then, with your ladyship's good liking,
" I'll just step down and finish a courante
" I had begun with Bernardine when
" Theodore interrupted us. No one but
" a native of dear Provence can dance or
" play a courante after the right fashion.
" Marry, I could have thrown my arms
" around the neck of this same minstrel
" when he told me he was from Provence,
" had it not been for pure shame!"

" Why, thou hast as little modesty as

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" Laïs or Corinna," exclaimed the lady Magdelaine angrily; " and were all my " women of thy bold deportment, this " poor youth might have shared the fate " of Orpheus, who was torn to pieces by " the Bacchantes."

" But, under your ladyship's good favour, " if there be no difference between a salute " and a song,"——

" Peace!" said the lady Magdelaine sternly; " retire instantly to your apart- " ment, nor violate by unseemly com- " portment the vestal propriety of thy " lady's household."

Beatrice reluctantly obeyed, followed by Agnes, who, with less temerity to express her wishes than the archly simple Beatrice, had not less propensity for courantes, madrigals, and roundelays.

Imogen in pensive silence still remained leaning on the back of the lady Magdelaine's chair, lost in profound reverie; her arm supporting her fair head, the minstrel's

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voice still murmuring on her ear, the minstrel's glance still beaming on her eye, while the sigh which trembled on her lip expired unconscious ere she was aware of its birth.

"Imogen!" said the lady Magdelaine mildly. Imogen started, suddenly resumed her seat, and, catching up her pen, demanded if she should go on with the bishop of Citeaux and the siege of Beziers?

"No," said the lady Magdelaine, "it "is late: I am not disposed for compo-"sition; the muses are not always pro-"pitious to the midnight vigils of their "votaries. I will read till I sooth my "mind to rest, and thou may'st retire to "thy apartment."

"What book shall I leave you, madam? "Here are the Sufferings of the holy Mar-"tyr St. Lawrence, who was broiled on a "gridiron."

"No, child, my feelings are not equal "to that."

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" Here is the Martyrdom of St. Francis,
" who carried his head a considerable
" distance after he had suffered decapita-
" tion."

" Nay, marry, that is still worse."

" Here are the Confession of St. Augus-
" tine, and the Trials and Temptations of
" St. Theodora."

" Poor St. Theodora! Her's were trials
" indeed! What a holy struggle between
" her and St. Dydimus when condemned
" before the prefect of Alexandria! And
" what is that that lies at the foot of the
" picture of St. Mary of Egypt?"

" 'Tis an odd volume of Ovid."

" Well, leave me that, and my rubric
" for vespers." Imogen placed the books on the table; and, wishing her lady patroness a good night, retired to her solitary apartment.

The clock in the great hall had tolled out the first half-hour after midnight; the domestics had retired to rest; and Ambrose,

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the ancient maître-d'hotel, who loved an old story and old wine as well as any other maître-d'hotel in the province of Champagne, was still entertaining the minstrel in the buttery with a flask of real muscadel, and an anecdote of the family de Montmorell, rather minute than interesting; when the minstrel, after a long pause, abruptly demanded, "I pr'ythee, good my friend, "what fair vision was that which hovered "near the chair of thy lady?"—"What, "my lady's pet owl?" said Ambrose; "nay, marry, fill thy glass, and thou shalt "hear the whole history of it. It was the "very same year that our late king Henry "the Third, of blessed memory, was elect-"ed king of Poland, which I take it was "about the eve of"——

"Nay, thou mistakest; I would know "who was the lovely maid that"——

"Ha! ha! by the mass, thou hast a hawk's "eye, monsieur troubadour! What, the "demoiselle with the cock'd-up nose, scar-

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" let fardingale, slop sleeves, and short " petticoats; with a certain roundish look, " and a laughing eye? It was the de- " moiselle Beatrice; and were my old " dame Jacintha gone to heaven, and the " damsel would cast but an eye of favour " on your humble servant,"—"Heavens!" exclaimed the minstrel impatiently, " you " still mistake me: the creature I mean is " delicate even to fragility; and there is a " nymph-like simplicity in her form, an " airy elegance in her figure, that might " give a model to the Genius of Sculpture " on which to rest his immortality. The " very spirit of Youth sheds its most touch- " ing graces round her; and the look of " playful gaiety that animates her counte- " nance is softened by that air of ineffable " modesty, which, like a transparent veil, " heightens those beauties it would con- " ceal. Her dress is such as Fashion in her " happiest caprice might adopt to render " loveliness more lovely; and though her

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"robe of grey, her veil, and rosary, speak "her a novice of some holy order, yet "Love, lurking in the dimple her arch "smile creates, seems to reclaim the sweet "apostate as his own!"

"Pardie, well done, sir minstrel! Mass, "an I would not as soon hear thee as "my lady herself, when she talks about "the gods and goddesses, and nobody un-"derstands a word she says save the father "director and mademoiselle Imogen."

"Imogen! is that her name?"

"In good sooth, is it. So, nothing will "serve your dainty taste but our young "nun?"

"A nun!"

"That is to be."

"And from choice, sayest thou?"

"Nay, by the rosary, I doubt if her "vocation lies much that way. Poor "soul! somehow she does not take kindly "to vigils and fastings; for which she and "the father director have some disputes,

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" and in which she always gets the upper
" hand, and that with so laughing a face
" that you would think she was in very sport.
" For when once she gets loose from my
" lady's study, she is as blithe as May; and
" then for charity, I'll set her up against
" all the ladies of St. Dominick, with my
" lady and the father director to boot."

" And are her means equal to her vir-
" tuous propensities?"

" Marry, no; and more's the pity! She
" has not a sous but as she earns it by her
" embroidery: which I sell for her at the
" next market-town, when I go for pro-
" visions; and then away with the money
" to the poor serfs who live on the skirts
" of the forest, and have been ruined by
" the civil wars: and, yet many a late hour
" does she sit up to do this, after writing
" all day for my lady. 'My good Am-
" brose,' will she say (with such a sweet
" begging face!), 'shall I coax thee for a
" taper to-night, and in good sooth I will

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" not speedily trouble thee again?' The " saints bless her for a sweet one! It were " the pity of pities to make a nun of her."

" Is she related to thy lady?" demanded the minstrel.

" No truly, poor soul! I wot, she never " had a relation: it is thought she was a " present from St. Dominick to the ladies " of our convent."

" He must have been a saint of very " little taste, or very great generosity, to " part with such an object."

" Marry, I warrant, hadst thou been " St. Dominick, thou wouldst have been " less generous. Ah! thou art a wag in " grain, sir minstrel. Yet the saint did " not part with her altogether; for when " she was found by the portress at the " wheel, though a coarse veil was what " the saint had covered her withal, yet " round her little neck was hung an agate " cross, bearing the letters *St. D.*; which " proved to the ladies of St. Dominick,

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"as plain as their own great spire, that the "saint meant to keep her all to himself. She "had just entered her noviciate, when my "lady begged her of the sisterhood to write "for her; for the demoiselle Imogen is a "rare clerk, and my lady is writing a His-"tory of how the saints used to kill and "burn the folk in former times, for the "good of their souls, and to save them the "expence of buying indulgences. Hark! "there goes old Tell-truth: pardie, another "quarter and we shall be on the second "cock-crow; come, monsieur minstrel, I "pledge you in our last glass of muscadel." Ambrose then arose, and conducted the stranger to the apartment allotted him.

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CHAP. II.

"Mangled peace!
Dear nurse of arts, plenty, and joyful births!
Alas! she has from France too long been chased;
And all her husbandry doth lie in heaps,
Corrupting in its own fertility.

SHAKSPEARE.

FOR thirty years Catherine de Medicis governed France, under the nominal sovereignty of her three sons, Francis II., Charles IX., and Henry III.

"*Il faut diviser pour regner*" was the darling maxim by which the wily Catherine directed her political life: and the increasing influence of the Hugonots, in the reign of her son Charles, animated her to the most refined practice of her favourite theory; and afforded to the artful and ambitious queen-mother a pretext for foment-

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ing those dissensions, and perpetuating those feuds, by which she hoped to undermine or subdue a faction which daily became more formidable and more dangerous.

Astrologers had foretold, that her sons would die without issue, and that the diadem of France would encircle the brow of a prince of the line of Bourbon. Even the strong mind of Catherine was not proof against these impositions, which the dark credulity of the age received with implicit confidence, and sanctioned with the profoundest reverence. It was therefore little to be wondered at, that the young Henry of Bourbon, king of Navarre, (of the blood royal of France, and the idol chief of the Hugonots,) became at once the object of her detestation and her dread: yet, by one of those profound strokes of policy which distinguished her reign, she offered him in marriage her lovely and accomplished daughter, Margaret de Valois; and, by this extraordinary proposal

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dissipated the Hugonot reserve, and gave an animated flow to the genial current of open-hearted confidence.

Although Henry embraced the proffered alliance, love had no share in this acceptance; his heart submitted to the tyranny of prudence, and his inclinations became a sacrifice to the wishes of his party, which was flattered in the hope that this union would disseminate peace to France, and give to eternal oblivion the religious and political factions of her children. The Hugonots, in the ardour of their hearts, dazzled by the splendid promises of Catherine and her son, crowded to the capital, where magnificent preparations were already made for the nuptials of the king of Navarre: and, bewildered by the pleasures, and intoxicated by the alluring enjoyments, of the most voluptuous court in Europe, the unsuspecting victims of the cruel policy of the queen slumbered over the dangers by which they were se-

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cretly surrounded; and, revelling in the fair illusions of the present, cherished no suspicion of the brooding evils of the future.

On the 18th of August, 1572, all Paris resounded to the lively acclamations of joy, happiness, and festivity; for it was the wedding day of the king of Navarre and the princess de Valois. On the 24th of August, 1572, all France re-echoed the groans of the slaughtered Hugonots, for it was the *massacre of St. Bartholomew!* History has enrolled in her annals the sanguinary transactions of this day with dreadful exactitude; but the eye, the heart, will eagerly pass over a recital of those horrid deeds, which even in perusal blanch the glowing cheek of warm humanity, and surpass in reality the fancied atrocities which the most depraved and sanguinary imaginations could devise.

Catherine, who possessed herself neither the religion of prejudice nor of truth, rendered

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the fanaticism of the times subservient to her policy; and instigated her jealous and deluded adherents, to a massacre which was executed under all the aggravating circumstances that religious fury, private pique, or public animosity, could devise. The young king of Navarre found a comparative safety in flight; Charles and his mother triumphed in their execrable machinations; and France, for twenty-six successive years, groaned under the complicated woes which the transactions of one day engendered.

Charles survived the massacre of St. Bartholomew but two years; and his brother Henry III. became the successor to that "barren sceptre" with which Catherine amused the puerile minds of her sons, while she still retained the reins of government in her own hand.

It was at this period that a dangerous confederation arose in France, known by the name of the League. Its leaders were of

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the house of Guise; its pretence, the defence of the church; and its secret motive, the subversion of the state. But that profound system of dissimulation which formed the soul of Italian politics, and which Catherine had imbibed with the principles of her idol Machiavel, served her in the most critical period of her life; and induced her to declare for the League, which she dreaded, and to unite herself to the Guises, whom she abhorred. Opposed, therefore, to the associated powers of the court and the League, stood the young king of Navarre: the hero of a little army of heroes; and, as he himself pleasantly expressed it, "a king without a kingdom,* "a husband without a wife, and a warrior "without supplies." Such was the situa-

* Spain had usurped the kingdom of Navarre from his father; and he continued to hold his miniature court at Bearn, the place of his nativity.

Vide *Perifix, Histoire de Henri le Grand.*

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tion of this magnanimous prince, whose character scarcely "smelt of mortality;" who, having conquered himself, was worthy of conquering others;* who possessed the ambition to encounter the greatest difficulties, with abilities to vanquish them; who united the talents of the statesman to the spirit of the hero; and who equally in the cabinet or the field betrayed a genius that bore all before it.

After the massacre of St. Bartholomew, he joined the few faithful adherents the cruel policy of his enemies had left him; but in the qualities of these superior few, was found an equivalent for the limitation of their number. The baron de Rosni, better known as the Duke de Sully, whose life presents so beautiful a picture of pru-

* Henry said of himself, "Nature has formed me passionate; but since I have been sensible of this fault, I have always endeavoured to vanquish so dangerous a propensity."

Mémoires du President du Thou.

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dence, wisdom, and loyalty; the marshal de Biron, so justly celebrated for his military talents and love of letters; the brave Crillon, whose valour bestowed on him the epithet La Noüe, to whose generous virtues even his enemies paid the homage of esteem; with many others scarcely less deserving of notice, though less fortunate in obtaining it, composed a little flying camp, of which Henry was himself the soul. Alternately the vanquished and the victor; consenting to interviews with the queen-mother, productive of no decisive effect; now openly meeting her forces in the field; and now signing truces, no sooner formed than violated; this gallant prince still continued to support the vicissitudes of his destiny with firmness and heroism.

Meanwhile the powers of the League, and the influence of the Leaguers, increased with hourly extent: it was believed by the royal party, that the designs of the ambitious duke de Guise were to dethrone the

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king,* and already was the duke's destruction determined on by Henry and his mother.

That popularity which the insinuating virtues and dazzling talents of de Guise had obtained, the amazing power he was endowed with, and the circumstances of the times, rendered a public process equally dangerous and difficult. Assassination was more consonant to the political prudence and cherished vengeance of Catherine; and the duke de Guise was murdered in the royal apartments (whither his unsuspecting confidence had led him) by the king's guards.

His death produced universal commotion. All Paris was animated by ungovernable fury! The duke de Mayenne, brother to the murdered de Guise, was declared his successor as chief of the League; and Catherine survived the vic-

* Henry III.

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tim of her barbarous policy but a short time.

The king of France, naturally imbecile, whose conversation was that of a capuchin, and whose life was that of a professed debauchee, vainly endeavoured to win the duke de Mayenne to his interest by the most splendid offers; and shrinking beneath those fatal circumstances which endangered his life and crown, he sought alliance with the king of Navarre, as a *dernier resort*. That careless and unguarded confidence, which formed so prominent a trait in the noble character of the gallant Henry, and which experienced treacheries had not chilled, led him to accede to the proposal; and the two kings met near Tours, embraced with fraternal tenderness, and vowed mutual enmity to the League.

This transaction was shortly after followed by the death of the king of France, who was assassinated by a young fanatic monk of the order of St. Dominick: and

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Henry de Bourbon (who united in his person the three races of the French kings), as lawful heir to the dominions of France, ascended its throne, and assumed the title of Henry IV. King of France and Navarre; and thus fulfilled the prediction of the astrological sybil, whose prophetic declarations had first rendered him the object of that hatred and persecution with which Catherine de Medicis pursued him through the most precious years of his existence.

France could not desire a master more worthy of governing her; more capable or more anxious to repair the losses she had sustained, and to restore her to that peace and unity, happiness and prosperity, which her own anarchical and vague commotions had forfeited. Yet still the greater part of her volatile children, blinded by party prejudices, or influenced by religious fanaticism, opposed his accession to the throne of his ancestors; and considered, or at least pleaded, his religion as an insurmount-

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able barrier to his elevation: and as the Leaguers possessed an army four times more numerous than that which surrounded the royal standard, the horrors of civil war still continued to spread devastation through some of the finest provinces in the kingdom.

Still opposed, and still unsubdued; tempering the most dauntless valour with moderation, the most heroic courage with humanity; the royal Henry appeared a being of more than mortal power, of more than human virtue: living in the midst of his troops; sharing their toils while he rewarded their efforts; animating them by the inspiring gaiety of his air, while he provided for their safety; and flattering them by cheerful presages of success, which his example taught them to deserve, and his genius seemed almost created to command. The celebrated battles of Argues, Yvri, and Aumale, have enrolled the name of the hero high on the records of immorta-

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lity; and, after having performed deeds of almost supernatural heroism before the walls of Rouenne, he was necessitated to raise the siege, and marched from thence to the investment of Neufchatel. It was in the interval between this period and the siege of Epernai, that the young minstrel of Provence appeared before the portals of the chateau de Montmorell.

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CHAP. III.

When ye dispel the train
That waits on beauty, then religion blows
Her trumpet, and invites another circle:
Which, full as false as the preceding crew,
Flatter her problematic mental charms,
While snuffing incense; and, devoutly wanton,
The pagan goddess grows a christian saint,
And keeps her habit of divinity.

WALPOLE.

How far beyond
The praise of mortals, may the eternal growth
Of nature to perfection half divine
Expand the blooming soul!

AKENSIDE

"THE age is barbarous," said the lady Magdelaine, as she returned one morning from the gay and splendid court of Catherine de Medicis, "and the courtiers are "all Goths and Vandals."

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The lady Magdelaine was then at that critical period of female existence, when the ebb and flow of youth and beauty are under the influence of a retrograde motion. She had attained her thirty-second year, and was unmarried; she had gone to court that day, habited in eastern splendour, and was neglected; which accounted for the barbarism of the age, and the Vandalism of the courtiers.

Nature had been a mere step-mother to the lady Magdelaine. She was considered as a moveable basso-relievo to the animated beauties of Catherine's court; yet unhappily the lady Magdelaine had an exhaustless passion for notoriety, in a situation in which the enchantment of loveliness, or the attraction of the Graces, alone could secure it to woman. Time continued to increase the vivacity of his assaults till the last cowardly charm of youth retreated, and obliged the lady Magdelaine to change her plan of operation. "I will reform the

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" age," said lady Magdelaine, " reform it " altogether:" and accordingly she patronized Baif, corresponded with Montaigne, took Jane of Bourbon, wife of Charles IX., as her model, and determined on making a new translation of Pliny, in opposition to the learned duchess of Burgundy; but pedantry without genius, and learning without taste, only rendered her the *but* of fashionable derision to all Paris.

" The world," said the lady Magdelaine, " is not only buried in the profound " ignorance of the middle ages, but im- " mersed in the atheistical darkness of an- " tiquity!" and accordingly the lady Magdelaine, by 'a transmutation rare,' descended from her philosophic stilts, to perform the bare-footed pilgrimage of humble christianity.

But religion was not just then the fashion at Paris; and the lady Magdelaine, under the persuasive influence of her father

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director, a brother of the Cistercian order, retired to her chateau in Champagne (of which the death of her only brother had put her in possession), to work out her salvation, to found a monastery, and compose the History of the Crusades; a work equally compatible with her talents as an authoress, and her sentiments as a devotee.

To father Anselm was consigned the superintendance of that holy pile which was to immortalize her piety, as her work, she believed, would her erudition; while every nerve of the father was stimulated to exertion, by the hope of becoming the head of that structure he reared. Along each half-finished aisle, and on every rising cloister, Interest hung the tempting lure of an abbot's cowl. Never did a building proceed more rapidly; it seemed a work of magic. For father Anselm 'had views on 'this side heaven,' which gave the wing of expedition to every effort.

Not so the learned labours of the lady

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Magdelaine: they seemed to increase in an inverse ratio with the exertions she made to complete them; they were indeed of Egean magnitude. A total want of connection, a strong instinctive propensity to anachronism, a multiplicity of crude details, and a crowd of too obvious plagiarisms, reduced the bewildered brain of lady Magdelaine to the *ne plus ultra* of authorship: but then the whole fault lay in the want of an amanuensis!

"I think, father," said she to the director, "you could find me out some young "brother of your own order, who could "at once officiate as almoner and se-"cretary; who could write a fair hand, "and knew enough of Latin to transcribe "with accuracy from the fathers."

"A young brother of my order!" reiterated the astonished father. The request struck on the very nerve where a thousand little selfish interests lay in embryo. "Why "cannot I offer myself?" thought the

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priest: but then, independant of his superintendance of the monastery, he was watching the fall of a cloisteral priorship in a neighbouring convent; he had been lately installed in the dignities of the confessional of the ladies of St. Dominick; and held not only the spiritualities, but the temporalities, of the lady Magdelaine in sacred trust. "My labours are indeed great," said the father. "So are your profits," whispered Interest. "No," said the father; "no competitorship for me, even with a brother of my "own order! Yet, if she must have an "amanuensis, why she shall: but marry, "I bar the young Cistercian; no, it shall "be the little Imogen of St. Dominick."

When saint Dominick had procured the sanction of pope Honorius III. to found a convent for nuns, he had, with benevolent gallantry, inserted a clause in the rules, that the sisters were to receive and educate such young daughters of misery, as the guardian spirit of innocence in dis-

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tress should lure to their sacred portals. Among the little victims of misfortune, thus received and admitted into the lay sisterhood, was one who had been taken at the wheel when an infant. They called her Imogen, for such was the name carved on the little cross suspended from her neck; and dedicated her to saint Dominick, for on the reverse of the cross were marked the initials *St. D.*; on her left cheek was a mark.

The lady abbess had heard that St. Theresa had just such another. The nuns looked wise, and saw a mystery in this coincidence, all but the minor canoness: she was perpetually tearing to pieces the sybil leaves of the holy enigma; but the nuns knew it was not the faith of the canoness that obtained her elevation.

The little Imogen, while yet a child, distinguished herself by a piety surpassing belief. Her canonization was already in prospect added to the convent's holy records; and

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the lady abbess was cried up as a prophetess. An old friar (predecessor in the confessional to father Anselm) had taught her to write: he did more; he taught her as much Latin as enabled her to read some of the fathers, who had not written merely to shew their philological talents, or their knowledge of the recondite branches of language.

At thirteen, she had not only read the works of the angelic doctor St. Gregory the Naziantine, but could repeat the various arguments advanced in those long disputes which existed between the capuchins and the Dominicans, on the reality of the wounds of St. Francis, and the orthodox cut of a monastic cowl. "It is a second "saint Theresa," said the nuns; and the blush of gratified ambition crimsoned the cheek of the meek-eyed novice. The saint Theresa was the standard of attainment which youthful emulation had erected in her bosom; and she affected to imitate the life,

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as she resembled the person and manner, of her idol saint.

The fragile delicacy of her form, the native enthusiasm of her disposition, her propensity to study, and the nature of those studies, all assisted to render her a fanatic, and disposed her to receive the inspirations of fancy as existing forms, and the bright illusions of a glowing imagination as real substance. Already the little saint had her extacies, her raptures, and her visions. Yet was her mind strong and comprehensive; but, deprived of all subjects of discussion or inquiry save what the dull repetition of convent bigotry afforded, she had not the power of rectifying the aberrations of reason by the observations of experience, or the benefit of a liberal intercourse.

The nuns of Saint Dominick were divided with respect to this prodigy: the younger sisters hated her for her superiori-

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ty; the elder cherished her as a saint in embryo. Sister Pasiphaë, the minor canoness, stood alone; she neither hated nor cherished; she admired her talents, derided her fanaticism, and pitied her delusion.

"Art thou determined on being a "saint?" said she one morning, returning from matins with the young novice.

"Not if I can be more than saint!" said the novice with fire.

"Thou art ambitious," said the nun, "and ambition is not the virtue of a "saint."

"Then *it is* a virtue?" said the novice eagerly.

"What wouldest thou wish to be, wert "thou in the world?" said the minor canoness, evading her question.

"In the world!" quickly repeated the novice, her whole face suffused with crimson. "In the world I would not be any "thing I have ever heard of I would be

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" more: but," she added with a sigh, " I " shall never leave this convent, and here " I can only be an abbess and a saint."

The minor canoness had long been in a consumption. She complained of weakness, and for the first time passed her arm through that of the young novice: the novice bent her fair head, and pressed her lips to the hand that rested on hers, in acknowledgement for the condescension.

" Go to," said the canoness, " thou " art dangerous; I would not love thee if " I could, for thou art" (she shuddered as she spoke) " a fanatic."

" I would be a saint," said the novice with simplicity.

" Thou hadst better be a christian," said the canoness.

" Teach me, then, to become one," said the novice, with a glance of irresistible insinuation. From that moment the minor canoness and the novice of St. Dominick were inseparable.

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Such was the person fixed on by the father director as the amanuensis to lady Magdelaine.

"The abbess is deceived in this child," said he. "She is pious, all-believing, and "understands a little Latin, but she is no "genius; for never did a confessional "echo to such a ridiculous list of pecca- "dilloes, as those she avowed yesterday: "the simplicity of her questions would "puzzle a conclave to answer. She has "entered her noviciate, 'tis true; but that "can be put off for a time."

The lady Magdelaine consented reluctantly to exchange the young brother of the Cistercian order, for the young novice of St. Dominick; and the abbess, well aware of the advantage of placing a member of her society about the person of one of the richest devotees in France, readily consented to the putting off her *profession* till the lady Magdelaine should have finished her Crusades.

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The novice learnt her intended translation from the convent to the chateau, with an obvious transport, rather inimical to the demure sobriety of her vocation. On her knees she received a little silver reliquary from the abbess, enclosing a few grains of the sacred brickdust scraped from the wall of the Santa Casa of Loretto, and promised to come every Sunday to perform her devotions at the convent. "I give thee "this precious relic," said the abbess, "as "a holy spell against the temptations of "a wicked world." The novice kissed it devoutly, and sprung on her feet with a playful levity not altogether appropriate to the pious exordium addressed to her. Yet as she seated herself in lady Magdelaine's litter, and waved the end of her veil to the nuns who stood in crowds at the chancel window, she wiped away one tear with her girdle, and received another on her lip, half closing in a soft Adieu! but it was from an eye as sparkling as Euphrosyne

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ever betrayed in her archest moments; it was on a lip as smiling as fancy ever gave to the cherub mouth of Hebe.

Imogen cast one glance at the gloomy and sequestered pile she had left; then flung another into the gay perspective that burst on her view: she bounded from her seat; her cheek flushed, her heart throbbed, every nerve was in a state of rapturous irritation. The world was new to her, and she was but sixteen!

Imogen was really so ignorant of Latin, or her change of situation had so much increased the native vivacity of her disposition, that, far from assisting the lady Magdelaine, she confused and entangled every thing. She made false transcripts, and worse translations; the fathers were made to utter nonsense, and the saints to speak with the levity of mortals. The lady Magdelaine was enraged: the director trembled for the return of the young Cistercian; and undertook not only to instruct the young ama-

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nuensis in the duties of her situation, but to assist her in her classic studies.

Imogen's thirst for instruction was insatiate. She received with avidity the lessons of her holy preceptor; and in a few months had not only conquered all the difficulties of the Latin tongue, but, mistress of its idiomatic delicacies, was able to detect the inelegances of the fathers, and did it with a freedom that in the eyes of the pious bordered on profanation.

The literary pursuits of the lady Magdelaine were *literally* lucubrations; for she rose late, and spent her mornings in her oratory, chapel, or tapestry-room. The greater part of the day was consequently at Imogen's disposal, and she passed it in the library of the chateau. The late lord de Montmorell was a man of letters: he lived and died in the midst of his books, and left to his learned sister the best private library in France. The studies of the young novice had hitherto been con-

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fined to the Golden Legend, the Lives of the Martyrs, and the works of Saint Gregory the Naziantine; but now a new world broke upon a mind replete with native intelligence, endowed with that insatiate desire of information which marks the nobler faculties of the soul, and enriched with that versatility of talent which is the distinguishing characteristic of genius.

From this mental regeneration, she cast a retrospective glance on the nature of her past studies; and felt like the being who, born unblessed with the precious sense of sight, in the first period of awakened vision flings his rapt eye on the glories of the creation, wonders, and adores!

Poor saint Gregory was the first who felt the effect of this intellectual revolution; and departed, with his pious phalanx, before the victorious arms of the two Plinys: a few verses of the elegant Tibullus were equal to the defeat of the sixty-two de-

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cades of saint Ely the Angelic: Plutarch's heroes overthrew the Golden Legend; and one book of Virgil completed the conquest of the whole army of martyrs! She had once thought there was nothing to be learnt out of her convent; and she now thought there was nothing to be learnt in it that would not disgrace the credulity of childhood: the influence of knowledge operating on genius, gave wing to thought; and reflection, bursting from the thraldom of prejudice and error, pointed its soaring flight towards the bosom of truth. Those mystical refinements which disfigure the purity and beauty of true religion; those logical subtleties which set common forms at defiance; those improbable legends, the wild offspring of disordered imagination or pious fraud; now appeared to her as they were, equally foreign to religion or morality, and frequently subversive of both. "If I am to be a saint," said Imogen, "I "will be the foundress of my own sect.

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" I will not seek for my religion in books,
" and modify it into systems, for I feel its
" essence in my soul; nor shall it be to
" me as the avenging angel of dreadful
" retribution, but the spirit of peace, of
" love, of bliss eternal!"

It was for this sentiment, imprudently uttered, that the father Anselm threatened her with all the artillery of the church; and decreed as a penance, to say daily, for a week, the seven penitential Psalms, the Angelus Domini ten times, the Litany of the Saints six, and the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin twenty-four. Yet was the little apostate pious, even to the definition of St. Paul: for she "laughed with those " that laughed, and wept with those that " wept;" nor was her heart alive to an emotion that had not borrowed its predominant feelings from the joy or sorrows of another.

Two years residence at the chateau had rendered her habitually necessary to the lady

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Magelaine, but had not produced that intimate connection which sympathy alone engenders. Alike involved in literary pursuits, and sequestered from the world, the strong opposition of their characters evinced that similar circumstances, when operating on dissimilar minds, will produce effects equally opposite.

The freedom which began to display itself in the opinions and conversation of her amanuensis, and the scepticism of her arguments even with the father director, frequently elicited the reproof, and roused the orthodoxical fears, of the lady Magdelaine: whilst Imogen, acting more under the influence of proud and conscious superiority than prudence, frequently brought the arguments of her patroness and the friar to the test of her liberal acumen, and detected their alloy with an air so triumphantly playful, that she was always sure to lose by the victory; and when additional severity pursued that triumph,

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used sportively to exclaim, with the celebrated king of Epirus, " Another such " victory, and I am lost."

The growing apostacy of the young novice soon became a subject of discussion at the convent of St. Dominick, owing to the complaints of lady Magdelaine. The nuns trembled for their *album sanctorum*. Sister Agnes requested she might be recalled, ere the spirit of Luther had wholly possessed her; sister Mary said an Ave Maria extraordinary; and the minor canoness sung out a heathen *Io triumphe!* The abbess, however, with a stronger view to *the church militant here on earth* than the distant prospect of adding a saint to the convent list, treated the surmises of lady Magdelaine as the too sensitive apprehensions of extraordinary piety, and only recommended to her not to spare wholesome severities and admonition, and urged the father director to wave his penitential crook over the sceptic head of the youthful apostate.

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The abbess's advice was not lost, yet apostacy seemed to feed on the antidote administered for its destruction:

> No stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
> Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
> Can be retentive to the *strength of spirit.*
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

Mean time the germ of proud ambition, cherished into being by the old nuns of St. Dominick in the heart of their young novice, stole into maturity with daily and insensible increase; and if no longer emulative of a place in the *album sanctorum* of canonized spirits, the strong propensity to super-eminence still throbbed with vague but ardent palpitation at her heart. Attracted rather by the splendid than the awful virtues, she embraced the brilliant theories of her imagination for the solid documents of reason; and enamoured by the beautiful ideal, the level path of cold "flat

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"reality" was neglected or contemned. Careless and unguarded, her conduct frequently evinced the little connection existing between genius and common sense: sanguine and impatient, the extreme vivacity of her disposition was only restrained by a softness more than feminine, and a meek gentleness that sprung from a sensibility tremblingly alive to the remotest apprehension of offence. Her glowing and susceptible heart was prodigal in its feelings, ere reason could exert its influence to discriminate the justice of those claims which had roused its profound emotions into being; and, alive to those exquisite and delicious sensations which bestow rapturous moments rather than permanent felicity, she readily granted her accedence to the dangerous maxim,

> Qu'un moment de vrai plaisir
> Vaut un siècle d'existence.
>
> LE MOUSTIER.

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The *naïveté*, the atticism of her manners, evinced them to be solely influenced by the predominant feeling of the moment, unmodified by the varying precept of fashion; unformed by the grotesque model of doating custom, they were natural, original, and pregnant with that indescribable something, which, analogous to the *non sa che* of her person, awakened an interest rather felt than understood. Yet was not she perfectly beautiful: it was the thousand glowing sensibilities of her soul that gave her face its sweetest charm, as colours mounting on the tulip's brilliant surface enrich it by the variety of their dyes. Her form, round and symmetrical, though below the ordinary stature, was perpetually animated by those graceful gestures which ever characterized her thoughts, even when silently conceived or imperfectly expressed; and there was a certain something, an inexpressible fascination, in her air

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and manner, which, like the philosopher's fanciful definition of the soul, "was all in "all, and all in every part." It was scarcely necessary that nature should have endowed her with woman's dangerous attribute, eloquence, to have rendered her the most persuasive speaker in the world. Her voice, rich, varying, and mellifluous, was the organ of her soul; and, vibrating in unison to all its feelings, sometimes stole its murmur of caressing fondness on the heart, whose woes it soothed; or, in the gayer moments of sportive animation, thrilled on the senses with syren influence, in pity or in joy, still giving to her words and sentiments a superadded existence.

The mystery which hung over the birth of the young novice, had so many parallels among the foundling members of the convent, as to excite neither amazement nor curiosity in any breast but her own. There, however, it lived a subject of perpetual in-

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terest and reflection: that tender heart, which, in the narrow sphere of her existence, throbbed in vain to meet with a kindred associate, delighted to lose itself in those fanciful speculations which restored her in idea to the endearments of parental love and the blessings of social affection. "What," she would exclaim to some unsympathising sister, in a paroxysm of romantic hope, "what if at this moment my father, "my mother, lived! if I had not been "torn from their arms in my infancy, "or a happy chance now led them to "the asylum that received me! Oh! I "should know them among a thousand; "I *feel* I should: and then I would throw "myself on their bosoms, and die the "blessed death of joy in their embrace!" The nuns sometimes smiled at her enthusiasm, but more frequently inveighed against the weakness of all human affections, and exhorted her to subdue their effects by prayer and mortification.

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During a severe winter, a robin had flown for shelter to her cell. The heart of Imogen throbbed with a violence equal to its own when she felt it fluttering in her bosom. It soon learnt to feed from her fostering hand; and when their alliance grew more intimate, it would sometimes receive its nutriment from her lip. All day it hovered round her, and at night it reposed on her bosom; it seemed to have stolen the art of endearment from its tender mistress, and almost returned her caresses with the same ardour with which they were lavished. At last it died beneath the ruthless fangs of a cat of the order of St. Dominick! Imogen was inconsolable. The abbess sternly reproved her for her sinful weakness.

"One *must* love something," said the weeping novice.

"Where is the necessity?" said the abbess coldly.

"*Here!*" said the novice, pressing her

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right hand to her heart, and raising her soul-illumined eyes to heaven, with an expression that seemed to say, "And from "thee, O my heavenly Father, have I re- "ceived it!"

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CHAP. IV.

Or su—e tempo
Che tu t'en vada e troppo lungamenti,
Hai dimora ancora—
Partité. GUARINI.

Like blooming Eve
In nature's young simplicity, and blushing
With wonder at creation's opening glow.
WALPOLE.

THE lady Magdelaine had not returned from matins five minutes, when the minstrel (the morning after his arrival) was summoned to receive his audience of leave. Ambrose conducted him to the entrance of the great gallery. The lady Magdelaine was standing at a distant window, in earnest conversation with her confessor. They both turned round, and fixed their eyes on the stranger. The friar's glance was keen, penetrating, and inquisitive: it seemed to

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anticipate verbal inquiry, and to threaten certain disapprobation; for he saw in the minstrel the young brother of the Cistercian order, or perhaps something still more dangerous.

The minstrel soon found he was drawn thither to gratify the friar's curiosity, rather than to obtain the necessary leave of departure, which the attempered looks of the lady seemed to deny; for the friar's questions were numerous, perplexing, and shrewd; the minstrel's answers were simple, ingenuous, and plausive. He repeated, at lady Magdelaine's request, his little story with undeviating accuracy.

"It is too simple not to be true," said the lady Magdelaine softly. "And too in-"consequent to need a comment," said the friar pointedly. Then turning round, he seemed in a *sotto voce* to expostulate rather than converse with her. At that moment Imogen appeared, crossing the gallery in a direct line to the spot where

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they stood. Her step was light and devious, her upcast eye beamed with the light of genius, and the glow which flushed her cheek seemed to ebb and flow to the impulses of her agitated fancy. Her veil had fallen on her shoulder, and discovered the fine contour of her head and neck. It was the head of a Sappho, deficient only in that voluptuous languor which should characterize the countenance of the enamoured Lesbian. It was perhaps rather the head of St. Cecilia under the influence of a musical rapture. A pencil, which she held in one hand, was suspended over the tablet which the other contained; and she appeared in the act of luring back to her memory some happy but truant thought which the "thick-coming fancies" of poetical inspiration had hurried half-realized into oblivion.

Nature had not wholly abandoned her weaknesses in the breast of the friar; and the point in debate between him and the

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lady Magdelaine seemed little favourable to those "leavings of mortality." It was with difficulty he had restrained the overflowing of his gall, when the novice of St. Dominick appeared to receive its bitter ebullition on her innocent head.

"Why, how now, daughter?" said the friar sternly. Imogen started: the spell was dissolved; the spirit of genius fled; and, hastily consigning her tablet to her girdle, she drew her veil forward, and paid the salutations of the morning.

The lady Magdelaine leaned in a musing attitude against the frame of the casement, and was silent. The minstrel stood concealed behind a projecting pillar. Imogen, the emblem of health and cheerfulness, advanced towards the friar. "I had hoped, "daughter," said the father director, "yes, *hoped*, that sickness had prevented "your assistance at matins to-day; for I "hold not in competition the temporary "sufferings of the perishable body, with the

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" soul's eternal torture: but that flushing
" cheek, elastic gait, this smile scarce re-
" pressed, this levity scarce concealed,
" speak, fatally speak, the body's health
" robust, the soul's deadly sickness!"

" Father, I knew not that health was a
" crime," said Imogen with simplicity.

" To devote ourselves to the vague and
" sinful wishes which redundant health in-
" spires; to pursue their gratification, to
" the neglect of our religious duties; that is
" criminal, daughter: but, Holy Mother!
" in you, who are destined to become the
" spouse of God,"—Imogen, shuddering, seemed to recoil from an honour she deemed profanation.

" Why wast thou not at matins?" sternly demanded the father.

" Dear father, the saints are witness it
" was my intention; nay, already had I
" reached the chapel, when I met"—

" Whom?" said the friar, in triumphant expectation.

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"Whom?" asked the lady Magdelaine, casting a glance towards the pillar.

"Who," repeated the friar eagerly, "seduces thee from thy devotions, and "steals between thy soul and heaven?"

"In very truth then, good father, it "was—a butterfly," said Imogen gravely.

"Pshaw!" said the friar, in a tone of peevish mortification.

"Nay, father," she sportively added, "let me entreat thy attention and belief. "Is it not in holy writ we find, that he "who despiseth little things, himself shall "perish little by little?"

"This trifler leads us from matter of "more moment," said the friar, turning to lady Magdelaine abruptly.

"You treat her errors with too much "lenity," said the lady Magdelaine evasively.

"I prithee, father," continued Imogen, laying the tip of her rosy finger on his arm, in the same tone of playfulness, "is

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" not the Greek term for the soul and for a
" butterfly the same? and did not you tell
" me the soul was fancifully supposed by
" the Greeks to exhale itself from the lips
" of the departed in the form of that
" lovely insect? Oh! it was a beautiful
" idea: and how often has the similitude
" struck me, when I have felt the spirit of
" my bosom, restless, fluttering, agitated,
" still soaring beyond its destined point of
" elevation, still reposing its joys on the
" bosom of future bliss! Oh, but this
" butterfly! It fled the cloister's gloom.
" Poor insect! how natural! — Unwit-
" tingly I pursued its devious flight. Its
" rich wings of purple and gold, expanded
" to every gale, glittered to every sun-
" beam. It revelled in such variety of bliss,
" so free, so wild, so uncontroled, that I
" sighed, and wished to be a butterfly;
" and, in good sooth, forgot my matins."

" Cease these ravings of thy distemper-
" ed fancy," impatiently interrupted the

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father, " hitherto tolerated in a child, but " grossly impious in the maturing mind of " one who approaches the hour of holy " initiation into the sacred mysteries of " the church."

" Indeed, father! and does that honour " exclude me from adoring the Deity in " his works?"

" Adore him, daughter, in thy cell, in " holy seclusion, in his consecrated tem- " ples, in monastic privacy: he asks no " more."

" Then may the spontaneous offerings " of my heart, though unasked, be not " unaccepted! This morning, father, when " my steps deviated from the chapel to that " glowing valley where all nature hymned " the praises of its God, thinkest thou my " orisons were less fervent because less " systematic? Oh, father! when I inhaled " new being with the morning's fragrant " breath; when that glorious orb rose on " my rapt gaze, and every dewy blossom

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" expanded its bosom to the genial in-
" fluence of its beams, and shed fresh per-
" fume on the air; when every bird sung
" its song of rapture, and every trembling
" leaf seemed endued with a tongue to
" breathe its praise to the Most High;
" thinkest thou, amidst this soul-inspiring
" scene, *my* full heart was silent? that on
" *me* alone the light of heaven beamed in
" vain? Father, the tear of rapturous gra-
" titude is not yet dry upon my cheek:
" *that* tear was my morning sacrifice to
" heaven."

" Father," said the lady Magdelaine,
" your patience amazes me. This is
" tantamount to the dangerous opinions
" of Spinosa: Manchees himself never
" breathed stronger materialism: the
" Gnostics are more christian in their
" ideas."

" Dearest madam," said Imogen softly,
" sure I have breathed no heterodox opi-
" nion, no heretical tenet: yet," she added

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playfully, " were I to become a heretic, " in good sooth I believe it should be of " the Gnostic order, such as you described " them, father, in your sermon on the eve " of St. Agnes, there is so much variety " in their *seven heavens!*"

" *Corruptio optimi pessima!*" ejaculated the father to the lady Magdelaine, turning up his eyes. " But I commend her, daugh- " ter, to thy prayers and exhortations. " Let us trust it is the weakness of her " brain, rather than the viciousness of her " heart, that deludes her." Then mutter- ing a few low words to the lady Magde- laine, he added aloud: " Thou knowest, " lady, sacred duty calls me to attend the " consistorial meeting of St. Menhoulm. " There shall I some few days sojourn: " in the mean time, to the saint's holy " care and guidance I consign thee."

The lady Magdelaine bowed, to receive the benediction which followed.

" And thou, young stranger," added the

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friar, walking towards the minstrel, "who "hast received so liberally the rites of "hospitality, depart in peace; here thou "mayest not longer tarry: it is the will of "the lady de Montmorell. Go, and St. "Dominick be thy speed!"

The minstrel, advancing a few steps, pressed his hands to his breast, bowed grateful acknowledgement to the lady Magdelaine, and profound obedience to the friar; who, waving his hand with a patriarchal air, pronounced a *Dominus vobiscum!* and retired.

It was now for the first time Imogen perceived the proximity of the minstrel: it was now for the first time she raised her timid looks, and met his eye. It was an eye that spoke its intimate connection with the soul, and the glance it emanated left upon the imagination something that dared the power of language to define; it sunk at once to the heart of Imogen, and became there a new sensation.

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Unaccustomed to the presence of a stranger, the habitual bashfulness of a young recluse veiled the vivacity of temperament, the aberrations of genius, and the playfulness of youth. Blushing, confused, and overwhelmed, Imogen drew down her veil, and played with the rosary that hung at her girdle.

With an air doubtful and hesitating, with a look of vexatious disappointment, the lady Magdelaine still remained leaning against the window-frame, silent and undecided: when, casting a glance to the court below, she observed the father ascending his litter for St. Menhoulm; and as his eye met her's, a faint benediction reached her ear. Her wavering resolutions steadied to the tone of his voice. She turned round to the minstrel; who, half-retreating, half-loitering, seemed as undecided as herself.

"Young stranger," said she, in a tone of affected softness, "pursue thy way: "may the muses be propitious to thy ef-

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" forts! may Apollo smile upon thy votive " lay! may the saints protect thee in thy " devious wanderings!"

With this half-heathenish, half-christian invocation, the lady Magdelaine slowly retired; nor, in the absence of her mind, perceived that she had left Imogen behind her.

The tall spectral figure of lady Magdelaine had disappeared more than a minute, ere Imogen herself observed her situation. She started, and glided swiftly after the lady, slightly but courteously bowing her head as she passed the minstrel. The minstrel bowed reverentially.

Had the image of his tutelar saint passed him in solemn procession, Devotion could not have stamped her traits of pious reverence and profound homage more impressively on his countenance.

Already had Imogen reached the head of the great stairs, which descended to the hall below, when the minstrel's voice ar-

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rested her attention, and she heard his footsteps echoing to her own.

" Stay, lady!" said he, in a voice of supplicating earnestness: " one moment " stay !"

Imogen turned round in surprize, in confusion. The minstrel drew back, fastened his eyes on the earth, and remained silent; but his silence was eloquence itself. A request seemed to hover on his lip, but the finger of modesty checked its utterance: he raised his eyes, and Imogen read it there.

" What wouldst thou, stranger?" softly demanded the novice, her own timidity vanishing before the more obvious confusion of the minstrel. The minstrel sighed, pressed his hand to his heart, yet was silent.

" Wouldst thou that I exert my little " influence with the lady Magdelaine in " thy favour," said she, construing the

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charactery of his brow into the most probable sense.

"Thou art all benevolent," said the minstrel, eagerly seizing on the construction she had given his wishes, "and hast "anticipated my petition."

"Speak then; how can I serve thee?" modestly returned Imogen, with eyes fastened on the earth, and a faint smile of encouragement playing round her lip.

"By procuring me leave from the lady "Magdelaine to remain a few days longer "beneath her hospitable roof."

"Alas, that thy request should exceed "my ability to obtain it! The lady Magdelaine is peremptory in her resolves: "and though in this respect they were not "to militate against thy wishes, still would "she not oppose those of her director; and "they, I fear, are not in thy favour."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the minstrel.

"Indeed," said Imogen: "he wills not

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"that strangers find an asylum in the "chateau; and in the unhappy situation "of the times, claims that sanction for his "scruples which humanity would with-"hold."

"Alas! then thou refusest me?"

"Indeed I scarcely dare hazard a re-"quest so hopeless of success; yet change "that request, and put my wish to serve "thee to the test. The lady Magdelaine "is rich, a lover of the arts,"—Imogen paused, and blushed: the pride, the delicacy, of a young mind, with respect to pecuniary matters, withheld the offer she was about to make in the name of lady Magdelaine.

"This harp is not the badge of beg-"gary, lady," said the minstrel proudly; "that which alone I would stoop to beg "for, you have refused."

"In good sooth," said Imogen, blushing still deeper, yet with a smile which she meant should heal the wound she had inflicted,

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" thou wouldst too soon repent thou hadst " preferred thy singular petition, or that I " had obtained its request; for, trust me, " thy professionally roving disposition, thy " gay and charming avocation, would ill " accord with the solemn gloom, the se- " questered tranquillity, of this profound " solitude."

" Lady," said the minstrel, with energy, " the nightingale, when first he soars be- " yond the parent's fostering wing, roves " unrestrained, and flings with careless " prodigality his witching strain o'er all " the scenes of varying nature; till, " lured by instinct to the rose's bloom, he " fastens on a neighbouring spray, nor " seeks to pour his strain beyond his idol " flower's balmy sphere." *

" I perceive not thy allusion," said Imogen, casting down her eyes, and changing colour.

* In allusion to the beautiful Persian fable of the nightingale being enamoured of the rose.

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" But I feel it," said the minstrel, with impassioned energy.

A faint blush, like a transient sun-beam, suffused the face of Imogen, and with a faint farewel she was retiring, when the minstrel, laying aside his harp, sprung after her, caught the flowing drapery of her robe, and exclaimed:

" Yet, oh fair being! one moment stay, " one little moment!"

" What would'st thou then?" said Imogen, trembling and confused.

" Thy forgiveness."

" But how forgive, where no offence " was offered?"

" Thou sayest true; no offence has been " offered; for heaven itself does not re- " ject the homage of the heart, however " inadequately expressed."

" Hark! 'tis the lady Magdelaine's bell. " Fare thee well. I will remember thee " in my orisons."

" Wilt thou? wilt thou indeed? Then

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" henceforth be Imogen my tutelar saint," said the minstrel, dropping on one knee, " and the sublime and holy sentiments " her lips so lately breathed, my ortho- " doxy."

" Farewell! farewell!" said Imogen, with increased confusion, " longer I dare " not tarry."

" But if thou darest!" said the minstrel, in a tone of soft but sly insinuation.

" Nay," said Imogen, with a smile, " would'st thou turn inquisitor to thy " saint to prove her fallibility?" Then loosing her robe from his grasp, she gracefully waved her hand, and with the airy step of a hamadryad vanished from his view.

The minstrel remained for a considerable time in the recumbent attitude in which the novice had left him. It was the sight of her tablet, which had fallen from her girdle, that acted like a spell on his senses, and restored him to him-

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self. He hastily snatched it up, and turning over its leaves read the following

ODE TO A BUTTERFLY.

Child of a sun-beam, airy minion,
Whither points thy flutt'ring pinion?
Pinion dipt in rain-bow hues,
Pinion gem'd with sparkling dews,
Shed from many a weeping flower,
Bathed in Matin's rosy shower;
Tell me why thy form so bland
Still eludes my eager hand;
Tell me, wanton, wouldst thou be
Madly wild and wildly free?
If freedom is thy life's best treasure,
Then get thee hence, gay child of pleasure,
From feudal tow'r and cloist'ral cell,
For freedom there did never dwell;
And I no more thy form will woo,
But pleas'd thy varied flight pursue:
And now upon a zephyr's sigh,
Thou seem'st in languid trance to die;
Now fluttering wild thy golden winglet,
Sports in many a wanton ringlet;

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Which the rose-lip'd morn exhales,
Thou soar'st to drink the sun's first gleam,
Or bask thee in each infant beam:
Then panting in thy heaven-snatch'd glow,
I feel thee fluttering round my brow,
Whence thy breezy plumage chases
Each tear the hand of sorrow traces;
Or as athwart my lip you fly,
Fan away the woe-born sigh:
Tear of sorrow—sigh of woe,
Early taught by fate to flow,
From a heart, a stranger still
To nature's dearest, sweetest thrill:
Tear of sorrow, sigh of woe,
Ne'er given thee, happy thing, to know;
Thee, whose life, a raptur'd minute,
Bears an age of blisses in it:
Thee, whose life, a minute's measure,
Dawns, exists, and fades in pleasure.
Oh, insect of the painted wing!
I've watch'd thee from the morning's spring;
As idly lapt in soft repose,
Midst the blushes of a rose;
The playful zephyr's balmy breath,
Has wak'd thee from thy transient death;
Or the bee, in tuneful numbers,
Put to flight thy fragrant slumbers:

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And as thy wings of varied hue,
(Dipt in rose-embosom'd dew)
You flutt'ring imp, and deftly fly,
Still *I* follow, still *you* fly.
Ever wav'ring, ever changing,
Never fix'd, and always ranging:
Midst the lavish charms of nature,
Thou her freest, gayest creature;
Now the tulip's changeful die;
Now the vi'let's balmy sigh;
Now the rose's orient glow;
Now the lily's tintless snow;
Woo and win thy brief caress,
Alternate pall, alternate bless!
Till the Summer's glow is o'er,
Till her beauties bloom no more:
Then the flower whose fragrant sigh
Survives her warmly blushing die,
Lures thee to a heaven of rest,
On her pale but odorous breast;
And amidst her balmy treasures,
Thou diest in sweet excess of pleasures!
Oh happy, careless thing, could I
But live like thee, but like thee die!
Like thee resign my fleeting breath,
My life of bliss in blissful death;
I'd envy not th' extended span,
The patriarchal day of man:

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For him let *Time's* protracting pow'rs
Still spare existence, drooping flow'rs,
And wreaths of joyless years entwine,
But oh, ONE rapture'd *hour* be mine!

The minstrel was a poet of *Nature's* own making, and his judgment was drawn from the same source as his inspiration; he was therefore no stranger to the justest, purest rules of criticism; but what had the rules of criticism to do with the rhapsodic effusion of impulsive fancy, or awakened feeling? Or how was the judgement to exercise its powers on the poem, while the heart, in the utmost vehemence of emotion, hung enraptured on the charms of the poetess? There was, besides, in the fragment, a consonance of sentiment with that the minstrel himself cherished, that awakened his sympathy, and secured his admiration. "Delightful "enthusiast!" (he exclaimed,) "fanciful, "but bewitching being, how extatic to "share with thee thy '*raptur'd hour!*'

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" to participate in thy fairy visions, to live
" beneath the warm beam of thine eye,
" and hang upon the melting murmur of
" thy voice, to spurn the cold dull forms
" of a world for which thou wert never
" created, and to range with thee through
" all the yet unconjectured bounds of feel-
" ing, sentiment, and passion!"

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CHAP. V.

Credi a me—
Non e pene maggiore
Che in vecchie membra il pizzecor d'amore.
Pastor Fido, Atto prima.

IMOGEN, *en reveuse*, wandered from the gallery to the great hall, from the great hall to the corridor, and from thence to the lady Magdelaine's study. Fancy and recollection were busy with the heart, and the mind was turned adrift under the influence of its own unconscious *égarements*. She found (yet scarce perceived) the lady Magdelaine seated at her writing-table, her eyes fixed on vacancy, her right hand supporting her head, the fingers of her left playing with the leaves of a superb missal which lay open before her. She took no notice of Imogen's entrance; who, with

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an air equally abstracted, seated herself at her little desk, and, as if touched by the magic wand of sympathy, fell into the same reflective attitude.

It is one of the properties of fire, under the influence of experimental philosophy, to blaze with greatest ardour, at the moment it possesses the least power to consume: it was thus with the heart of the lady Magdelaine, it flamed when most incapable of communicating the faintest glow to the most inflammable object, and languished beneath the '*besoin de l'ame tendre*,' without the power of exciting it in another in the remotest degree: philosophy was no proof against the eloquence of briliant eyes; and the enthusiasm of devotion did but transmute its object without abating its ardour.

The lady Magdelaine went from the gallery to her study, whither the minstrel's form pursued her. She fixed her eyes on the picture of saint Peter, and bowed her

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head; but his saintship disappeared, and the lady Magdelaine saw nothing but the symmetrical form of a young man leaning on his harp. She opened her missal, but her eye was incapable of receiving on its *retina* any object but one; and the missal's holy leaves, like the picture of St. Peter, presented nothing to her view but the minstrel. A thousand times she likened herself to Dido, and the minstrel to Eneas, whom the God of Storms had thrown on her protection: nor could all the self-interested sophistry of the father Anselm reconcile her to the step she had taken, in banishing him from the asylum he had sought. Imogen had been some time seated opposite to her, before the silence mutually preserved was broken by her ladyship.

"Mathias Corvinus, king of Hungary, "kept three hundred secretaries," said the lady Magdelaine. "Poor souls!" said Imogen, with a sigh of fellow-feeling, and dip-

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ping her pen in the ink, preparatory to her taking down what she supposed the learned minutes of the lady Magdelaine for a future chapter of the Crusades.

" The father Anselm," continued lady Magdelaine, " thinks *one* more than enough " for me." Imogen answered with a sigh, heavier than she had already heaved.— " Longinus was private secretary to the fa- " mous queen Zenobia; and yet I have read " he was young and handsome when she " first received him into her service," muttered the Lady.

" That could have been no objection," said the novice innocently.

" The father Anselm thinks otherwise," said the lady Magdelaine. " Holy Mother! " why has he not the liberality of St. Je- " rome? who expressly tells us, ' fear God " and do what you will.'

" Egenhart was secretary to Charles the " Great," continued the lady Magdelaine, musing, " when Imma, the emperor's

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" daughter, became enamoured of him. " Poets and musicians are certainly dan- " gerous inmates, and in a domestic capa- " city not to be guarded against; witness " the attachment of the empress Julia to " Ovid;—"

" Was he her secretary?" asked Imogen simply.

" The queen of Navarre's penchant for " the poet Amayot, her amanuensis; and " lastly the unfortunate passion of Mary, " queen of Scots, for Rizzio, who was " only a poor Italian minstrel."

" And was he young, and handsome, " and graceful?" eagerly demanded Imogen.

" He was ugly and deformed," replied the lady Magdelaine.

" That men should be so different!" sighed Imogen.

" What an Herculean labour have I " undertaken?" said the lady Magdelaine, looking round at the books, papers, and

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manuscripts, that lay scattered in disorder on every side. "Surely mine is the des-
"tiny of the Danaides; what a treasure
"would a young man be to me, who
"could arrange, connect, and transcribe
"with fidelity; who would be modest,
"unassuming, and respectful. For in-
"stance, if father Anselm had not the
"same objection to my employing this
"young stranger as an amanuensis, as he
"had to my retaining him in his musical
"capacity,"—

"Which I dare say he has not," exclaimed Imogen with vivacity.

"And that this young Orlando could
"write a good hand;"—

"Which I could swear he does, ma-
"dam," said Imogen eagerly.

"But what avails it now?" said the lady Magdelaine, sighing, "since he has
"departed."

"Not ten minutes back I saw him in
"the gallery," said Imogen, blushing;

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" and Theodore waits in the antichamber,
" if you have commands for him."

" Well then," said the lady Magdelaine, in a tone of hesitation, " you may, if you " please, tell the page to command the " stranger's attendance; not that I posi- " tively mean to—"

Before she had finished the doubtful sentence, Imogen had delivered her message to Theodore.

In a few minutes the page returned leading in the minstrel: Imogen hung her head over her desk, and seemed deeply engaged with her pen; the lady Magdelaine assumed an unusual air of dignity and reserve, as if to hide the weakness of her heart beneath the severity of her manners and countenance. The minstrel, with a look of mingled suspense, impatience, and hope, stood in respectful silence, to know the nature of those commands which had again brought him to her presence.

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After an awful pause, the lady Magdelaine exclaimed: "Ere I inform thee, young "stranger, of the motives which have in- "duced me to recall you, it is necessary "you should know, that I have long since "devoted my life to the service of the "church, and the republic of letters. Thou "wilt start at a determination so extraor- "dinary in a female, for the days of piety "and learning are no more; we must no "longer hope to see a shelf, like that in "the library of Euclid, filled with the "works of learned ladies; we must no "longer hope to hear of a philosophess "like Dama the daughter of Pythagoras, "or Theano of Crete; such an historian "as Anna de Commines, or such a poetess "as Sappho of Lesbia, or Corinna of "Thebes: and female sanctity is, I am "afraid, a treasure still rarer than female "genius, to be found in this Gothic age; "a perfect union of both is, perhaps, in "any age, a *rara avis in terra!*"

The lady Magdelaine paused, and raised

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her eyes to observe the effect her learned speech and modest inuendo had produced on the minstrel; but unhappily, at that moment, the minstrel was observing the effect produced by a sunbeam, as it fell like a glory round the seraph head of Imogen, and touched her form with something more than human. The lady Magdelaine bit her lips, hemm'd away her mortification, and desired Imogen to retire till she was sent for.

Imogen, who blushed equally for the pedantic folly and childish vanity of her patroness, and blushed a still deeper dye at the slily observed gaze of the minstrel, was glad to be dismissed, though her little heart throbbed with impatient curiosity to learn the result of that conversation from which she was excluded. She arose and retired from the study, with that downcast look of unaffected modesty, which ever gave to her air and countenance the chaste attractions of vestal purity.

While lady Magdelaine remained in a

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tete-a-tete conference with the young stranger, Imogen flew to the garden: the brilliant beams of the meridian sun, the tempered freshness of the noontide air, the melody of the birds, the balmy fragrance of every fleeting zephyr, were all in unison with the tone of her spirits, and spoke a language her heart understood. Plunged in that luxurious flow of thought, which a new and pleasing object awakens in a mind long steeped in the sluggish inanity which solitude uninterrupted and a perpetual sameness of objects and ideas impress, a thousand new-born pleasures fluttered at her bosom; every nerve was in that state of refined susceptibility, which thrills to the faintest touch; every pulse throbbed to the animating influence of some sweet and novel emotion. "Why "am I so happy?" asked Imogen, with a light bound, while the fragile blossom scarcely bent its head beneath the airy pressure of her foot; then with a sudden

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transition of thought, though not wholly unconnected with the self-interrogation, she began to reckon over all the men she had ever seen.

It required no great extent of arithmetical powers to complete the calculation: "Two friars of the order of saint Francis, said Imogen, counting on her fingers, "four "of saint Dominick, and two lay brothers "of the Cordeliers, all old, ugly, and bi- "goted; the bishop of Champagne in his "last visitation to our convent: what an "unwieldy, bloated form, and what a "rigid air! our three successive confess- "ors at the convent; the first squinted "most hideously, the second was turned "of seventy, and the third!"—all the inquisitorial horrors of father Anselm's countenance stared her in the face: "an "interesting young monk, in the last "stage of a consumption," continued the novice, torturing her memory, "who "came to our abbess for a small piece of

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" the rod with which saint Dominick used
" to flagellate himself, as a charm against
" his disorder: the Clincaillen,* who sells
" us reliquaries, crucifixes, and sweetmeats,
" at the convent gates; four old knights of
" mount Saint Michael, occasional visi-
" tors to lady Magdelaine, with war and
" famine lurking in every lineament of
" their harsh faces; and two knights of
" St. John of Jerusalem; the one with a
" wooden leg, the other wanting an eye:
" these are all I can recollect, except the
" ferocious-looking serfs of the forest, the
" old domestics of the chateau, young
" Theodore the page, and this young min-
" strel."

Imogen blushed to her eyes as she concluded her calculation.

" Perfection itself," said Imogen, with the air of a little logician, " is only esti-
" mated as such by comparison; the form

* Clincaillen, a travelling pedlar.

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" and manners of this stranger may not " positively possess all that excellence I " ascribe to them; but, by comparing him " with all the men I have ever seen, his " superiority is so eminent, that I could " almost believe him a creature of another " sphere, a being of some superior mould, " and formed of finer clay. Good hea- " vens!" (colouring again, but not quite so deeply, " how the minor canoness would " laugh at this fanciful idea, and call it " the wild flight of her romantic little " saint! What is this minstrel to me? " only one must think of something," said Imogen, tearing a flower, she had just gathered, to pieces, and entering the door of the great hall, when she meant to have turned towards the terrace.

" Here is rare news," said Beatrice, running against her: " holy rosary! who " would ever have thought to see any " thing young and handsome in the cha- " teau again?"

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"Thou art in good spirits, Beatrice," said Imogen smiling.

"*Certes, mademoiselle*, and with good "reason; I thought we should never have "danced a courante again: but I must hie "me to the tapestry-room, to tell them "the news."

"What news, I prithee?" demanded Imogen, catching the flying Beatrice by the gown.

"Why, mademoiselle, do you not know "my lady has hired the minstrel? I just "stepped into my lady's study, to know "whether I was to give Mr. Jephtha a black "eye, and how the poor dear young de- "moiselle's robe was to be shaded, whom "they are going to sacrifice; when who "should I find there but our old *maître-* "*d'hotel* and the young minstrel! 'I "have added this youth,' said my lady to "Ambrose, 'to my household establish- "ment, and he is to have an apartment to "himself, and a table to himself, for I

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" have conferred on him the honour of be-
" ing my private secretary.'—But, blessed
" Agnes! the dinner-bell rings, and not a
" stitch done yet!"

Beatrice flew up the great stairs leading to the tapestry-room, and Imogen turned into the dining-hall. The lady Magdelaine was already seated at table; the novice started to find the day so much older than she suspected, and seated herself in silence opposite to her patroness. Had Pythagoras presided at the feast, a more unbroken taciturnity could not have been preserved, or the law of temperance been more strictly attended to.

Although pleasingly involved in the novel variety of her own emotions, the attention of Imogen was insensibly attracted to the alteration visible in the air, manner, and dress, of her associate.

The lady Magdelaine, who had hitherto considered a total disregard and neglect of the proprieties of dress as the most irre-

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fragable proof of internal acquirements and literary pursuits; and often quoted the purposely inked nails of the emperor Julian, as authority for her contempt of all the *bienséance* of the toilet; now appeared to Imogen for the first time to have sacrificed to the Graces: but the Graces, as if to shew their pique for the former heresy of their new convert, were most unpropitious to her offering.

A coif, or ruff, never worn since the celebrated tournament given at the coronation of Francis II., and a fardingal of cut velvet made after the fashion of one of the beautiful Diana of Poitiers, produced no other effect than to render ugliness and deformity more apparent.

Imogen had recourse to the bouquet in her bosom to conceal the ever ready smile, that hovered on her lips; while Ambrose, Bernardine, and Jaques, as they attended at table, cast many a glance, pregnant with reverence and admiration, at the immense

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gold *etui* which hung at their lady's side, sufficiently ponderous to throw her off her centre, had she not given equilibrium to the balance in a fan of proportionable magnitude, which now hung from her girdle, and on state days was the rod of office that denoted the official capacity of her page.

Silent, musing, and reflective, as she played with her spoon and plate, Imogen imagined she was busy with the bishop of Citeau and saint Bonaventure; for Imogen was ignorant of the complicated anatomy of the human heart, and was only a logician when the cause or effect interested her mind, or awakened her apprehension.

Ambrose, however, somewhat more penetrating, observed to Bernardine, as he replaced the silver cup and massy salver in the buttery, "that although his lady was "silent, he knew she was in a *diable de* "*bon humeur*, for he observed her smile "more than once; not to mention," said

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the maître-d'hotel, " her calling me *mon-*
" *sieur* Ambrose, and ordering me to treat
" this new secretary with a flask of light
" muscadel: *mort de ma vie!* I have more
" than half a mind to ask her good leave
" to ride the Spanish jennet, as far as Saint
" Menhoulm, for my new doublet and
" hose."

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CHAP. VI.

If music be the food of love, play on.

SHAKSPEARE.

O si una vola
Volta il provassi;
Se sapessi una volta
Qua'li e grazia e ventura
L'essere amato il possidere amando,
Un reamante Core;
So ben io che direste,
Dolce vita amorosa,
Perche si tardi nel mio Cor venesti.

GUARINI.

THE lady Magdelaine retired from the dining-hall to her oratory, as was her usual custom; and Imogen, having tumbled over a hundred books in the library without reading a line in one, sauntered to the tapestry-room. She found the demoiselles Beatrice, Blanche, and Agnes, busy with the sacrifice of Jephtha's daughter.

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" Pardie!" said Beatrice, continuing a conversation which the entrance of Imogen had for a moment interrupted, " here " is mademoiselle will end the dispute at " once."

" I prithee let me hear it," said Imogen, seating herself at a vacant frame.

" Why, mademoiselle," said Blanche, " 'tis all about the colour of the min- " strel's eyes. Agnes will have it they " are black as her jacket; Beatrice vows " they are blue: holy mother! if I know " whether he has an eye in his head why " then am I a saint! though certes me- " thought he looked marvelously like the " picture of Beelzebub in the shape of a " comely youth, in the legend of St. " Maxima; and I warrant you I counted " my beads under my fardingal all the " time I was in his presence."

" Thou art always counting thy beads " somewhere or other," said Beatrice; " but I would lay my watchel-coloured

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" taffety to a copper sous, that for every " Ave Maria thou sayest for thy soul, thou " repeatest ten for a husband."

" Better pray for a husband for one's " self," said Blanche sneeringly, " than " take up with the cast-off affections of " other folks' husbands."

" Blessed St. Dominick! there's an im- " putation!" said Beatrice colouring; " but " I scorn your words, mademoiselle; and " though you are so devout, and such a " mass-woman withal, I doubt if you " were counting your beads under your " fardingale when the young minstrel was " squeezed into the oriel window with you " this morning, and you were winding " the silk off his hands, when all the rest " of the family were at matins."

" Did you wind your silk off his hands, " Blanche?" said Imogen, snapping her needle in two.

" Pardie! and what of that, made- " moiselle?" said Blanche: " the saints are

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" witness I was repeating my litanies, and " thinking of no mortal man, when my " reel snapped, and the minstrel, who was " walking up and down in the hall, had " the civility to offer to hold my silk."

" The minstrel," said Beatrice sarcastically, " knew"—

" What of the minstrel?" interrupted the lady Magdelaine, at that moment entering the apartment: " what of the min- " strel? and what licence are you giving " your tongues? Beatrice, must I always " command you to sacrifice to the goddess " Muta, or warn you of the fate of Lara, " who, though celebrated for her elocu- " tion, lost her voice from speaking too " much?"

" Well, lady, I am silent," said Beatrice; " marry, if I speak another word to-day " I will give any one leave to cut my " tongue out."

" You may finish, however, what you

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" were going to say when I entered the " room," said the lady Magdelaine, significantly.

Beatrice plied her needle, and continued obstinately silent.

" Who is it was speaking of the " minstrel ?" said the lady Magdelaine peevishly.

" Dear my lady," said Blanche, " we " were only saying, that, with your lady- " ship's good liking, it would be pure " pleasant pastime to have monsieur le " troubadour singing and playing for us " while we are at our frames, especially as " we have wrought hard all day."

" Why, damsels," said the lady Magdelaine, with a look of unusual complacency, " I should have no objection " to indulge you in a matronalia, which " was tantamount to the Saturnalia of the " men among the Romans: but I have not " engaged this youth in the capacity of a

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" musician, but a secretary. Yet, as this " is the festival of St. Theodora, and you " have worked hard all day,"—

" Sweet my lady," said Beatrice, forgetting her vow, and oversetting her frame as she leapt up; " sweet my lady, you are " all goodness, and I will have the minstrel " here in the twinkling of a needle." And before the lady Magdelaine had finally decided on the propriety of suffering her young secretary in his musical character into her presence, Beatrice returned, ushering him in. He had brought his harp, and bowing low as he entered, cast a modest glance towards lady Magdelaine, expressive of his sensibility for the favour conferred on him. That glance steadied the wavering intention of his patroness. " He " is timid, modest, and unobtrusive," said she mentally, " and needs encouragement." Then, after a pause, she exclaimed, in her usual tone of dignified solemnity:

" Although I have only engaged thee

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" in the sober station of a secretary, nor
" with a view to encourage unlicensed
" merriment among my domestics, yet, as
" I may sometimes call on the witcheries
" of thy art, to dispel the cloud which
" Study hangs on the brow of her vo-
" tarists, I have summoned thee this even-
" ing to give me a specimen of thy tune-
" ful powers. Although no performer my-
" self (though I once touched the lute
" and recorder), the progress of harmony
" is not unknown to me. 'Tis to Apollo
" we owe the invention of the lyre. He
" owed it to love, and first tuned its
" chords to soften the cruelty of Daphne.
" Timotheus would have enriched it with
" a few additional strings, had not the
" muses forbad the innovation. But it was
" by the voice, which Zeno calls the flower
" of beauty, that Apollo won the prize
" from Marsyas and Pan. Plato has termed
" poetry without music, a beautiful face
" which has lost its bloom; Epaminondas

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" was reproached for his musical igno-
" rance; Socrates did not disdain to study
" its theory, and Pythagoras reduced it to
" mathematical rule; not to mention those
" great musicians, Olympus the Phrygian,
" Aristoxines, and Ptolemy. Alas! we
" have nothing now to compare to the
" tetherichord, monochord, cithera, and
" right and left handed flutes. But whi-
" ther am I wandering? I forget that
" Erudition has not led thee through her
" mazes of scientific lore; that thou art
" but the pupil of Nature, and ignorant
" perhaps of the rules of that art thou
" professest. And yet the inspired Sappho
" preferred the wild notes of her beautiful
" but ignorant Phaon to the homage of
" Alceus, the most elegant poet and mu-
" sician of his day."

" And had I been that Phaon," said the minstrel, with *naïveté*, " I should soon " have become an Alceus too; for Sappho

" would have been at once my inspiration " and my theme."

" Indeed!" said the lady Magdelaine, with pleasurable surprise; " but perhaps," she added with a smile of condescension, " thou hast already tuned thy lays to the charms of some fair rural beauty."

The minstrel sighed, drooped his head, and lightly thrilled on the chords of his harp.

" Do, good my lady," said Beatrice impatiently, " let him sing the quaint, pleasant, and marvelous ballad, of the Merry " Knight and the Maid in the Vestment " of Blue."

" No," said the lady Magdelaine languidly, " I should prefer something in the " Lydian measure, or hypo-Phrygian. I " once witnessed the soothing powers of " the latter. It was a short time before I " left the court, and at the marriage of

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" the duke de Joyeuse: * Claudin, the
" modern Timotheus, by playing in the
" Phrygian measure, animated one of the
" courtiers to such phrensy that he flew
" to arms in the presence of his sovereign,
" till the cunning minstrel stole him back
" to reason in the soothing strains of the
" hypo-Phrygian. Let me then have
" something that sooths the spirits, and
" moves the soul to tender thoughts."

The minstrel bowed, tuned his harp, and, after a symphony of wonderful execution, struck a few low chords, and accompanied the instrument with his voice. It was a voice of no very extensive compass, but it was a voice that breathed the sweetest intimation to the heart; its great charm lurked in the skill with which it was managed, and the exquisite expression of its tones; every note sighed the spirit of

* Vide *Dictionnaire de Musique*, par Rousseau, article *Musique*.

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passion, and every word had the energy of a sentiment. His accompaniment was rich, wild, and various; yet the execution of the musician only seconded the ideas of the poet, without overwhelming the sense by the sound. The measure of his verse was original, and his song was *love:* he described the progress of its sensations with the *naif* simplicity of a novice, who delineated from the consciousness of his newly awakened feelings; but it was in the language of a master, who could adorn his subject with all the seducing graces of poetic imagery and fanciful epithet. His sentiments were such as love impresses in the first æra of its empire, but still they were such sentiments as love only produces when acting on the soul of genius and sensibility.

Rapt, agitated, sublimed, his feelings became the sport of his art; and, lost in the sweet delirium which his own vivid imagination awakened, his fingers trembled on

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the strings; the harp's soft vibration faded into silence, his voice died away to a sigh, and his eyes, beaming with genius and passion, fastened their eloquent glances on Imogen; who, for attitude, expression, and beauty, might have that moment given a model to sculpture or painting for the figure of attention animated by rapture.

One hand was folded on her throbbing bosom, the other leaned on her frame, her form bent gently forward, every feature expressive of the rapt enthusiasm that swelled her breast, every glance emanating the visionary raptures that fluctuated in her fancy. The hidden soul of harmony had hitherto lain dormant in the bosom of Imogen; for till now those magic powers that could alone awaken its sympathies were denied her. Oh! you, who have felt a rapture even to agony from the influence of those strains that breathed the soul of passion, of sentiment, of something even more than either; who have in vain at-

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tempted, with languishing curiosity, to define the sweet, the overwhelming, and visionary joys that float on the fancy, and collect them into an object of comprehension; conceive (for you only can conceive) the emotion of the novice, as, hanging on the minstrel's witching lay, she felt herself endued with another sense, and her heart throb with sensations, to whose existence she was till then a stranger!

Imogen still seemed to listen, though the minstrel had ceased to sing, till her delirium fading away, like the dissolving visions of a blissful dream, left her involved in a soft and tender melancholy, scarcely less delicious than the raptures which had preceded it.

Although the lady Magdelaine had neither the taste or judgment to appreciate justly the exquisite musical talent of her secretary, she had vanity enough to construe the sense of his song as an effusion inspired by the charms of his noble mis-

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tress; and though the dignified pride of nobility was insufficient to combat the frail weakness of the woman, yet she disguised the fallibility of her heart beneath the coldness of her deportment.

After a slight commendation, she added: "I thank thee for the entertainment thou "hast afforded me; but the hour devoted "to erudite labour is arrived, and in a "few minutes I shall require thy presence "in my study, to instal thee in thy new "avocation." The minstrel with lowly reverence retired; and the lady Magdelaine, having given some general orders to her women, shortly after left the apartment, telling Imogen she should not that evening have any occasion for her service.

The lady Magdelaine had scarcely closed the door, when the impatient Beatrice eagerly demanded, "Well, mademoiselle, "how like you the minstrel's singing?"

"*Like* it! gracious heaven! like it!" repeated Imogen, throwing her arms on

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her frame, and covering her face with her veil.

"Why there!" returned Beatrice, much mortified, "I thought mademoiselle would "think nothing of it. The moment he "began, I saw he was shame-faced before "my lady. Blessed Rosary! one verse of "the Amorous Shoemaker is worth a thou-"sand such as he sung now."

"For my part," said Agnes, "I would "as soon have heard old Ambrose con-"ning over his rubric as such a die-away "ditty, not a word of which I under-"stood."

"But his eyes!" added Blanche; "who "observed his eyes? and then how the "colour came and went in his cheek, and "how his hands trembled! Poor modest "youth! I swear I felt for him."

Thus in chit-chat commentary passed away the rest of the evening, till the supper-bell summoned them to the hall. Imogen remained alone, silent and thoughtful;

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her arms still rested on her frame, but she had raised her head, and her eyes were fixed on the last beam of the evening sun, as it faded on the height of a distant mountain. The tapestry-room opened on a little covered alley, formed expressly to afford a walk in despite of the weather's inclemency: thither Imogen bent her steps; and, seduced by the balsamic freshness of the air and beauty of the evening, she descended a flight of marble steps that led to the terrace beneath. This terrace, which encircled the chateau, was shaded by luxuriant linden-trees, and surrounded by palisadoes; it commanded a view of the beautiful valley of Nogent, reposing in the shelter of those stupendous mountains whose summits were involved in the mists that rose in sun-tinged columns from their rugged sides. The fantastic finger of eve had thrown her vapoury wreaths on every object, and hung every blossom with a balmy tear. A thousand wayward forms

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dappled the air, and the still beamy west flushed a rich tint on the softened and indistinct landscape; while the towers of the chateau, and the distant spires of the convent of St. Dominick, were already invested with the gloom of an artificial night, flung from the lengthened shades of the forest of Champaigne.

Imogen hung over the palisado, fixed her eyes on the blue waves of the Aisne that glided beneath, and pursuing their furtive course, extended her gaze to the rich vale through which they rolled. It was a scene finely in unison with her feelings: the air inspired a delicious languor; she was melancholy, but not unhappy; pensive, but not mournful; and to a thousand vague and varying ideas succeeded a train of reflection, which had for its object the past circumstances of her life, her present situation, and future prospects.

"Alas!" sighed Imogen, "memory, "hope, or conviction, are alike unfavour-

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" able to the wishes of *my* heart! An " exemption from every enjoyment the " heart loves, the understanding ratifies; " an alien in sentiment, in feeling, to " those with whom I am doomed for ever " to associate; with a soul too much alive " to those views even reason condemns, I " am wretched, yet scarcely know where- " fore; I am unhappy, but dare not com- " plain." At that moment a nightingale took possession of a tree that shaded the spot where she stood, and poured forth a strain, " most musical, most melancholy." Silence seemed enamoured of the lay, nor suffered a breeze to sigh its hidden rapture. Imogen listened for a considerable time, silent and delighted; till, involuntarily apostrophising the charming songstress, she exclaimed: " Sweet bird! all nature hangs " upon thy thrilling plaint; while the soft " but melancholy privilege of even sigh- " ing away *my* sorrows is denied me!"

" And canst thou have a *sorrow*, thy-

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"self the type of bliss?" said a voice low but distinct.

Imogen started, turned round with a faint exclamation of surprise, and beheld the minstrel. From the impulse of undefinable timidity and confusion, Imogen would instantly have retired; but the minstrel's attitude of graceful supplication, his voice of respectful entreaty, operated with her secret wishes to detain her; yet it was with a modest reluctance that left her determination doubtful.

"If," said he, "I violate by my pre-
"sence the sanctity of your secret medi-
"tations I will instantly retire; but if
"thou (who so sweetly canst deplore thy
"own hidden sorrows) art not insensible
"to the woes of others, O turn, and suf-
"fer me to enjoy the temporary bliss
"chance has invested me with; for it is a
"sweet stranger, and my heart welcomes
"it with all its liveliest transports."

"Art thou too then unhappy?" de-

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manded Imogen with sympathising earnestness.

"How shall I answer thee?" said the minstrel, "or make thee understand that "solecism of the heart, by which I feel "this moment as the happiest, yet perhaps the most miserable, of my existence? Hitherto my life's happiness has "consisted in fugitive minutes, exquisite "but few: I revelled in their transient "felicity, yet still my pleasures multiplied "in expectation, and memory extolled "their worth beyond the value of their "own identity; while actual fruition played lightly o'er each sense, and left the "heart's aching void unfilled."

"Alas!" said Imogen with emotion, "I do remember me thou hast said thou "wert an orphan from thy infant state, and "haply hast never felt a father's warm "embrace, nor known a mother's rapturous caress. The tender kindness of "endeared relatives may not have lived

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" for *thee*, nor the sweet recognition of a " friend awaked thy bosom's transports: if " so, I pity thee!"

Imogen turned aside her head, and wiped away a tear with her veil. A silence for a moment ensued; and the minstrel, gazing on her, with a sigh exclaimed:

" Such is the pity which angels give to " suffering man: yet not for such depri- " vations thy goodness has enumerated, let " thy pity only flow; for, oh! feels not the " heart a void but what collateral claims " can occupy? feels not the heart a want " but what the tie of consanguinity can " obviate? oh, too sure it does! Rest- " less and unquiet, it throbs, it languishes " for some soft blessing, some long-ima- " gined bliss, rather desired than under- " stood; and wildly palpitates with fond " impatience to lavish its glowing sensi- " bilities, its overflowing raptures, on an ob- " ject worthy to awaken and receive them. " Yet pardon me, lady, if, all-sainted as

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" thou art, I speak to thee in language
" thy holy ignorance of mortal passions
" will scarcely comprehend. Reared in
" the school of sacred self-denial, where
" Nature's self, awed into submission by
" stern Religion's voice, resigns her pre-
" cious influence, and leaves the vestal
" soul to heaven, thou canst never have
" known the pang which wrings the heart
" when it shrinks upon itself in conscious
" desolation; when the glowing feelings,
" gasping with rapturous emotion, sud-
" denly chill and wither in the want of
" that sympathy which is denied them!"

" Can I not?" exclaimed Imogen em-
phatically, clasping her hands, and raising
her eyes to heaven: " Oh God! how
" keenly have I felt all you have de-
" scribed. I am not the happy but de-
" luded being you suppose; for oh! less
" rich in what I possess than poor in my
" conscious deficiency, I would gladly

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" exchange my feelings for the apathy I
" condemn in others, the credulity I com-
" passionate."

" I understand thee," said the minstrel with energy and delight; " thy mind has " soared beyond the narrow limits of error " and prejudice; thy heart, unsophisti- " cated by the doctrines of bigotry and " superstition, is still rich in all those pre- " cious feelings which are at once the " proudest boast of humanity, the sweetest " endowments of nature. And art thou " then, thus formed to bless and to be " blessed, doomed to wither out thy life " amidst a convent's solitary gloom? is " thy spring of youth to lose its rosy " bloom in fasts and vigils of mistaken " piety? and are thy brilliant talents, thy " touching graces, thy mind's intelligence, " to live and to decay amidst the blight- " ing coldness of ignorant and uncongе- " nial associates?"

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Confused, and blushing at the flattery or pleasing truths so artfully conveyed, Imogen replied:

"I am indeed destined to a monastic "life; I have scarcely known any other: "yet my days, if exempt from rapture, "have flowed on in peace, and that life "which is virtuous can scarcely fail of "being happy."

"O deceive not thyself, sweet saint!" said the minstrel with a soft smile: "superior to thy associates, dissevered from "the world, thine will be such a life of "solitude as contradicts the purposes of "Heaven, and hurls defiance to the law "of Providence. Oh! trust me that "Nature, ever enamoured of the happi"ness which mutual pleasure bestows on "her children, chills the solitary fruition "of undivided bliss. The heart, the ten"der heart, has no self-existing principle "of happiness, but reposes upon a thou"sand sweet dependencies for all its rap-

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" tures! Say, shall I not construe thy
" silence into a tacit coincidence with
" assertions thy own feelings must have
" often made? Or, if thou art still a scep-
" tic, look on thyself with *my* eyes, and
" be a *convert:* behold the bright intelli-
" gence of that countenance, those blushes
" which invest the throne of genius; those
" eyes, so dangerous in their softness, so
" bewitching in their vivacity; and those
" fugitive graces, which leave the gaze of
" admiration in sweet suspense where to
" fix a charm which is every where dis-
" cernible; then wouldst thou say with
" me, Nature never designed so fair a
" work to grace a convent's gloomy cell."

Overwhelmed, confused, secretly delighted, but apparently displeased, the native delicacy rather than the prudence of Imogen represented to her the impropriety of listening to such language, in such a situation, and from such a person as now addressed her in a strain too grateful not

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to be dangerous. Almost trembling with emotion, she drew her veil over her face, and said: "How our conversation has "wandered so widely from its first point "I know not; but methinks thou didst "begin it by invoking my sympathy to "thy sufferings: judging of them by my "own, I have more than pitied thee. "But see! the lights already glimmer in "the casements of the chateau; and pro-"bably the lady Magdelaine will speedily "require thy attendance in the study."—Then turning away, she was slowly retiring, when the minstrel, springing after her, caught her robe.

"Yet stay!" said he eagerly; "for such "a moment may never again return."

"And what then?" said Imogen, coldly disengaging her robe.

"To *thee*, lady, nothing; but to me—"for such a moment I would gladly for-"feit an age of common-place existence. "Oh, withdraw not from me this fair

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" hand, but suffer me to breathe on it
" those effusions of gratitude thy conde-
" scension has already excited."

" Forbear, forbear!" exclaimed Imogen, with difficulty releasing her hand: " already hast thou taught me the extent " of my imprudence, and to repent it."— She instantly glided away; and, flying through the alley, entered the tapestry-room, now only faintly lit up by the moonlight, and almost breathless reached her own little apartment. She threw herself on her couch, and pressing her hand to her heart, as if to check its ardent palpitation, gave a loose to that flow of sweet and novel emotion, that train of interesting and animated reflection, which involved her mind and flurried her spirits almost to wildness.

She had for the first time conversed with a being, whose mind and sentiments, sympathising with her own, could enter into all the delicate minutiæ of her feelings.

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She had for the first time participated in that sweet commutation of ideas which forms life's best blessing, by which the sublimer powers of nature are called into action, and attain the highest perfection the soul can reach. Her mind, hitherto like a fine instrument rich in passive powers, now for the first time vibrated to the magic touch of sympathy; and her heart unfolded many latent principles of delight, to whose possession she was hitherto a stranger; while fancy and imagination flung their glowing drapery around those visions of bliss which stole their existence from the consciousness of her newly-awakened feelings. The sanguine joys of youth and inexperience live but in the present; the past and the future are alike given to oblivion; and sad experience has not yet awakened into life the suggestions of doubt, the precepts of caution.

Imogen was happy, even to delirium;

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and, lost in the pleasant illusion to which her whole soul was resigned, the morning dawn broke through her casement ere she pressed a pillow which had hitherto never been the witness of a sleepless night.

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CHAP. VII.

Conforme èra l'etate
Ma il pensier piu conforme.

TASSO.

Non, ce n'est ni par choix ni par raison d'aimer,
Qu'en voyant ce qui plait on se laisse enflammer.
D'un aveugle penchant le charme imperceptible
Frappe, saisit, entraine, et rende un coeur sensible;
Et par un inscrutable et necessaire loi,
On se livre à l'amour sans qu'on sache pourquoi.

T. CORNEILLE.

FOUR days had been allotted for the consistorial visit of the father director at St. Menhoulm; and three of the four had already expired. The minstrel was not only installed in his literary avocation, but proved himself adequate to the task he had undertaken, by a knowledge of the learned languages beyond what might

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have been expected in the eleemosynary pupil of the brothers of *les petits Augustins*.

This discovery of the intellectual perfection of her secretary, heightened by the modesty which had concealed it, did not lessen the prepossession his personal graces had awakened in lady Magdelaine's bosom. His influence increased with hourly addition, and his attendance in the study was required at an earlier and protracted to a later moment than had hitherto been usual with the lady Magdelaine herself to devote to her lucubrations.

Imogen's attendance was less strictly required, and her little desk was removed to a remote corner of the apartment, while the minstrel wrote at the same table with the lady Magdelaine. Imogen was employed in copying from the fathers, or in making extracts from the Lives of the Ten Thousand Martyrs, and the Eleven Thousand Virgins; while the minstrel transcribed

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the sentiments of lady Magdelaine on the fervour of holy love, seraphic raptures, and religious transports; and the lady Magdelaine, in those discussions which so frequently interrupted the labours of her secretary, talked more of Ovid than saint Bonaventure, and quoted Sappho almost as often as saint Genevieve: accompanying her commentary with a look so relevant to the theme, that the minstrel must have been very deficient in penetration or vanity, not to have observed the abstract devotion of his learned patroness; who was not a little animated by the presence of a sensible object, as the shrine and statue frequently stimulate that exertion of piety offered to the relics and the saints.

Meantime the novice and the minstrel continued to each other little more than 'a shadow to a shade.' Confused and overwhelmed by the consciousness of those feelings which had insinuated themselves into her bosom, timid and doubtful of

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herself, the young novice of saint Dominick exchanged the infatuating candour and playful ingenuousness of her character, for a reserve, a diffidence, a thousand times more dangerous; and the minstrel, apparently awed into distance by the reserve she assumed, and pursued by the vigilance of lady Magdelaine, only returned her coldness with that

"Silence that speaks, and eloquence of eyes:"

but, constantly associated in the same pursuits, their accordant feelings slumbered not over those fine and impalpable indications of sympathy, which a glance indicated, a blush betrayed.

The fibre of connection which exists between the eye and the soul, served as a conductor to their mutual emotion, and gave the electric spark of passion a mutual influence. This touching silence, this delicate and enforced reserve, shed over their sentiments that veil of mystery, in which

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the dawn of passion loves to enshroud itself, and which the maturity of tenderness ever looks back to with fond regret: yet it was evident the ardent emotions of the minstrel with difficulty brooked the restraint he laboured under; nor could even the awful presence of the lady Magdelaine check those sallies of vivacity, that hyperbole of ironic compliment to her genius, or that sarcastic equivoque, with which he commented on some extraordinary passages in her literary works. Imogen trembled for his temerity: but the minstrel felt he could err with impunity; and, pleased with the privilege, took advantage of the only immunity it could confer, as an indemnification for those of which it deprived him.

Meantime the domestic subjects of Montmorell commented on the enviable situation of the new secretary, with a variety of observation. The women were disappointed, for the harp was laid aside, or

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seldom heard till the family had retired to rest; and then only from the open casement of the minstrel's apartment. The men complained of upstart airs, and affected superiority; and Theodore, the young page, with a sigh acknowledged, that he hated, envied, and admired him above all human beings! Such was the political state of the castle, when the father director, on the moment of his return from St. Menhoulm, proceeded to the lady Magdelaine's apartment; and in the large green velvet arm-chair, of which he had been the sole occupant for near five years, and close by the easy chair of the lady Magdelaine, beheld the minstrel seated, or rather lolling in an easy attitude, while the lady Magdelaine read aloud the last chapter he had transcribed.

Had a spectre blasted the gaze of father Anselm, his countenance could not have exhibited stronger emotions of surprise, anger, and disappointment: but, accus-

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tomed to resist the influence of nature under all her variations, the duplicity of his character prevailed; and with assumed composure he advanced towards the lady Magdelaine, who, receiving him with undisguised confusion, instantly dismissed the minstrel.

Scarce was the friar seated, when the lady Magdelaine entered on a vindication of her conduct in respect to her new secretary, with an eagerness that ever defeats the purpose it is meant to effect; and availing herself of the *equivoque*, that she had not received the stranger in his gay profession of a minstrel, but in the sober avocation of a secretary, hoped to make her peace with the director for the violation of her promise, and her disregard of those admonitions which he had so strongly pointed against the minstrel's longer residence at the chateau.

The friar received her excuse in silence, and immediately turned the conversation

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on another topic, without a single commentary on that which had been just discussed; while the lady Magdelaine, surprised and delighted by a silence which she construed into a perfect coincidence with her wishes, put a purse into his hands, when he arose to retire, to distribute, she said, as his judgment and charity should direct, but in reality to reward an acquiescence so little expected.

The friar had no sooner disappeared, than she sent for her new favourite with a confidence she had not experienced since his inauguration. Three successive days flew rapidly away; the civil wars were re-allumined in the province, and political discussion seemed for an interval to usurp the place of that strong partiality and aversion the minstrel had awakened in the bosoms of the lady Magdelaine and her confessor; while a thousand favourable and precious chances secured to the minstrel the happiness of beholding or conversing with the

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novice of saint Dominick. One morning, after a long, and perhaps wearisome, conference with the father director, the lady Magdelaine sent for her amanuensis into the study; and, not disposed for composition, she put the Confessions of St. Augustin into his hands, and reclined on a couch while her young secretary read aloud those self-reprobations of the good bishop of Hippo, which present such a struggle between grace and passion, piety and nature: and already had he made a considerable progress in the detail of human frailty, which the sincerity rather than the prudence of the saint betrayed, when the door flew open, and the friar appeared pushing in Imogen before him, and pointing towards a paper he held in his hand.—"Behold, ma-" dam," said he, "the pious effusions of " a novice of the holy order of St. Domi-" nick, whose inspirations, though of a late " date, and whose theme,——"

"Father!" interrupted Imogen wildly,

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the shining moisture of her eye swelled to the tear of passion, her face and neck covered with blushes, and every feature despoiled of its sweet and tranquil expression;—"father, restore me that paper: it "is mine; intended for no eye but mine; "and to expose those secret, though inconsequent thoughts, you have forcibly "possessed yourself of, is equally a breach "of principle and honour."

"Principle and honour," said the friar sarcastically, "well become the lips of "one who meditates the violation of every "sacred vow, tramples on the modest decorums of her sex, and perverts those "gifts with which Providence has endowed "her, to——"

"Father," again faintly interrupted Imogen, "'tis impossible to defend what "is not even understood; but——"

"Such deficiency of comprehension is "convenient," said the friar, with a sneer; "but to speak more unequivocally, I

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" should have said that this new object of " your poetic devotion, in engrossing that " time, those talents, and those medita- " tions, which should only be used to the " glory of God,—"

" What new object?" demanded the lady Magdelaine, almost breathless.

" Oh, father," exclaimed Imogen, eagerly interrupting his reply, " thou wouldst " not have me believe any act of mine can " in aught add to or detract from the glory " of supreme perfection? there is impiety " in the thought."

" Away!" said the friar: " no more " will I listen to the caviling of thy puerile, though profane sophistry: go to " thy chamber, and invoke the saints in " thy behalf; for the spirit of heresy is " fastened on thee, and drags thee towards " eternal perdition!"

" Merciful heaven!" exclaimed the minstrel, starting forward with uncontrouled emotion, and pointing towards Imogen:

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" look on that countenance, father, behold " in it the image of divinity itself, the " inviolable sanctity of virtue; listen to " the sentiments which flow from those " pure lips; compare them with the blame- " less excellence of the life they illustrate; " then threaten this guileless, this perfect " being with eternal destruction, if you " dare!"

" If I dare!" retorted the friar, a livid hue overspreading his countenance, his whole frame convulsed with agitation; then, after a successful struggle of a moment, he added in a tone of resignation, and smiting his breast, " dare! but it is " well. Suffer me, lady, to retire; thy cas- " tle, I well foresee, can no longer afford " a safe and honourable asylum to thy " poor beadsman; insulted, bearded, even " in thy presence, let not the meekness of " the christian sully the dignity of my holy " vocation." Then with a look of humble resignation, he let his crosier fall within

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his arms, raised his eyes to heaven, and retired in silence.

The faculties of the lady Magdelaine seemed bound, as by the spell of magic. The oblique hints of the friar, so pregnant with mortification, so capable of insinuating the poison of jealousy, though only expressed by self-interest, to awaken distrust; the temerity of the minstrel, in boldly avowing himself the champion of the apostate novice, including in his vindication so many personal eulogiums and enthusiastic praises; and the sudden departure of her director; left the lady Magdelaine for some time, not only immoveable but speechless: at length, recovering in some degree from the influence of her overwhelming emotions, she cast an angry glance at the minstrel, and exclaimed with affected calmness, "Although vulgar in-"dignation loves to deal in elipsis and "aposiophesis, philosophy disdains the lan-"guage of passion, nor can even hypocrisy

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" or ingratitude rouse it from its perpetual
" calm. Yet thy temerity, young stranger,
" might well sanction such evident resent-
" ment as was displayed by the philoso-
" pher Phyre, the Elean, who pursued
" his cook even to the market place, with
" a spit in his hand, for a trifling offence:
" yet I will only admonish thee, that thy
" further residence at Montmorell de-
" pends upon the prudent circumspec-
" tion of thy conduct, and the re-
" spect and deference thou payest to that
" holy man, whose sacred character, but
" now, thou daredst to insult: but as for
" thee, insidious serpent, whose mind has
" as many cunning devices, as a chileago-
" num has angles,"——

Imogen, who till now stood overwhelmed and silent, raised her timid glances, and attempted to interrupt the lady Magdelaine: whose philosophy, however becomingly observed towards the minstrel, seemed now nearly reduced to the same ebb as

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that of the sage of Elea; while her stern eye, turned towards the beautiful countenance of the novice, stole from thence new fuel for her rage.

"Peace!" cried the lady Magdelaine, "I will not be imposed on by thy duplicity: to-morrow restores thee to thy "convent; there thou wilt have time to "reflect on thy ingratitude, and to repent "it."

The tear which had fallen on the cheek of Imogen dried on its glowing surface; the fire of indignant pride flashed from her languid eye; and she retired in silence, and with an air of native dignity, which, opposed to the affected hauteur of the lady Magdelaine, marked the vast difference between the inborn greatness of the soul, and the ostentatious pride of a mean and self-sufficient mind. Almost at the same moment the lady Magdelaine quitted the apartment, in order to follow the friar, and deprecate the wrath of a being who, raised

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from nothing by her ill-bestowed bounty, had obtained an influence over her mind and actions she had neither the penetration to discover or the power to obviate; leaving her new favourite, as she believed, to "chew the food of sweet and bitter fancy," and to repent the temerity which she wished him to suppose had nearly forfeited her favour for ever. Nothing, however, was farther from the favourite's thoughts: his eye had for some time impatiently dwelt on the paper he had seen fall from the friar's trembling hands, and which he supposed contained the subject of Imogen's accusation; and no sooner had the lady Magdelaine left the apartment than he eagerly gathered up the fragments, which had been the efficient cause of the foregoing scene. It was so torn and defaced, probably in the struggle between the friar and the novice, that it would have been illegible to any eye but that which now endeavoured to devour its contents: it contained a few un-

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finished stanzas, of some poetical merit. That they were addressed to himself, although he believed never intended for his inspection, the minstrel soon discovered; and that they flowed with the warmest sentiments of admiration, he was not long in developing. The poetess at once professed his genius to be the theme of her song, and the model of her imitation: she dwelt with enthusiasm on the charm that lurked in his lyre, and the spell that breathed in his voice. She personified him as the genius of minstrelsy; and, under the sanction of her own fanciful image, worshipped him she had immortalized! while her heart, trembling for the ardour of her imagination, frequently appeared to check its daring flights; and her modesty, suspecting the treachery of her heart, veiled with a timid hand the warmth of its glowing dictates.

The minstrel would have regretted that this little effusion had been left unfinished,

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could any regret have insinuated itself into an heart overwhelmed by those rapturous emotions which the first conviction of awakening reciprocal admiration, and delighting those, with whom we have long been delighted, excites: rapt, intoxicated, he read the unfinished address, not once, but twenty times; while the heart and vanity of the man were too highly gratified, to suffer the judegement of the critic to exert its powers unbiassed by partiality, uninfluenced by self-love: the poem therefore was exquisite, and the poetess more than ever divine!

Imogen had fled from the lady Magdelaine's apartment to her own, where she passed the remainder of the day in tears. Her proud heart swelled with indignation, at the unmerited severity she had been treated with before the minstrel; and every delicate and refined feeling recoiled on itself, and agonized to the recollection of those oblique hints which the friar let fall

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of her partiality to the young stranger; trembling with apprehension lest the subject of her poetical inspiration should behold a witness that might be construed into the strongest confirmation of the friar's surmises; and recollecting that the friar had dropped her little poem, although her agitation on leaving the room had prevented her executing the intention of securing it, she hastily rose and fled to lady Magdelaine's study, in the hope of still finding it there; but the most diligent search was fruitless.

Disappoinnted and low-spirited, she was returning to her apartment, when the reviving freshness of the evening air drew her towards the open casement of the gallery through which she passed. It was the hour of vespers; all the family, herself excepted, were still in the chapel, and the castle was involved in a solemn silence that corresponded with the scene which at once

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attracted her gaze and spoke peace to her wounded spirits.

The sun was setting with uncommon splendour; and the clouds, concentrating on their surface a thousand vivid rays, sometimes assumed the appearance of floating mountains, emitting from their luminous points flashes of living gold, and sometimes streaming like meteors through the deep blue of the glowing atmosphere. Scarce a breeze panted on the verdant foliage, and the spirit of peace seemed to expand its *pennons* o'er the soft solemnity of the hour; while the crescent moon, already displaying her silver horn, bathed her beams in the waters of the Aisne, whose bosom was darkened by the lengthening shadows of the castle's lofty turrets. It was a scene finely in unison with the feelings of Imogen: her eyes dwelling on the glories of the creation, a religious rapture diffused itself around her; and with all

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her glowing emotions "thick about her," she bent one knee to the ground, and offered up that incense of the heart, "*whose fragrance smells to heaven.*"

Her spirits calmed, her feelings sublimed, by this pious indulgence of her soul's grateful effusions, she arose to retire, when turning round she perceived the minstrel leaning against a pillar near the spot where she stood. He darted forward to detain her, as with a hurried pace she was retiring.

"Not by a sigh," said he, catching the drapery of her robe, "not *even* by a sigh, "would I violate the sanctity of thy holy "occupation; yet now thy orisons to "heaven are finished, turn, fair saint, and "grant that hearing to another which but "now haply thou invokest for thyself."

Surprise and confusion for a moment held Imogen in suspense whether to obey the dictates of her prudence or her wishes; and the minstrel, taking advantage of her

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dubious silence, led her gently back, and continued: "May heaven grant thy petition, as thou hast acceded to mine; and may happiness be as liberally bestowed on thee as thou hast power to bestow it on others!"

"Mine were not prayers of supplication," said Imogen smiling, "but the effusions of the heart, grateful for blessings conferred, throbbing with rapture and delight."

"Such then be mine!" said the minstrel with impassioned earnestness; "and here on this beauteous hand suffer me to offer up the effusions of a heart, grateful indeed for blessings conferred, yet still presumptuously claiming."

Imogen in confusion snatched away her hand, and would have instantly withdrawn; but the minstrel, again catching the drapery of her robe, exclaimed: "Forgive, oh! forgive the temerity of an imprudent, who, borne away by the im-

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" petuosity of those feelings your presence
" is but too much calculated to inspire,
" finds even the respect he owes you in-
" adequate to resist their influence."

" I entreat," said Imogen faintly, " you
" will suffer me to retire."

" If," continued the minstrel, " I bear
" about me some secret cause of your too
" evident antipathy, suffer *me* to with-
" draw; but oh! let me not intrude upon
" those sweet meditations of a refined and
" superior mind, or banish thee from the
" contemplation of a scene so beautiful
" and sublime; so congenial to a taste
" alive to all that is most exquisite in
" either; a scene where a moral interest
" attracts the heart, and pensive memory
" loves to identify that spot sacred to *Eloisa*
" *and Abelard*." *

* The Paraclete monastery was founded, in the diocese of Troyes, Champagne, by Abelard, who was interred with Eloisa in an adjoining monument.

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"To *Eloisa and Abelard!*" returned Imogen starting.

"Behold," continued the minstrel, artfully fascinating her attention, and insensibly drawing her back to the casement, "behold that mountain, whose base the "moon's fantastic light now silvers; be"neath its sheltering height repose the "mouldering ruins of the Paraclete."

"Alas!" said Imogen, with awakened enthusiasm, "why has the knowledge of "a circumstance so interesting been so "long denied me?"

"Because," said the minstrel, "thy "unkind destiny has thrown thee among "those, who, dead to the finer feelings "of the soul, reject the higher joys which "taste and fancy give; whose barren "hearts, wrapt in their own self-adoring "pride, ne'er stole a pleasure, save what "self-love inspired; and whose con"tracted minds, deceived by pious fraud, "seek heaven on motives as selfish as the

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" means they pursue to attain their end
" are childish and puerile. But, oh sweet
" enthusiast! thou whom genius, fire, na-
" ture, warms; whom thought, feeling,
" and taste, raise in the scale of thinking
" beings even above thy species; 'tis for
" thy rapt fancy to consecrate the scene
" sacred to departed genius; 'tis for thy
" warm sensible heart to pay the homage
" of a sigh o'er the spot sacred to the re-
" membrance of unequalled but unfortu-
" nate love."

The gratified ambition, the gratified heart of Imogen sent a glow to her cheek as she replied:

" In the stillness of a fine evening,
" when the setting sun had flung his glow-
" ing beams on those picturesque ruins
" which skirt the mountain's base, it
" should seem that an intuitive something
" led me to their contemplation; and my
" eager gaze has dwelt on them till fancy's
" mimic powers peopled the deserted

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" shades with forms wild and fantastic,
" and gave to every mouldering dome,
" to every ruined cloister, an appropriate
" inhabitant."

" And yet," said the minstrel with a sigh, " that scene of savage desolation was " once the sad retreat of youth, beauty, " and genius; of love unsubdued, of pas- " sion too potent for reason, or even re- " ligion, to conquer. It was beneath the " shelter of that wild and gloomy valley " the unfortunate and enamoured Abelard " fixed the last residence of his heart's " idol. He sought a scene congenial to " the sombre temper of his own feel- " ings, and the unerring sympathy of love " taught him to believe in unison with " those of his wretched mistress. Per- " haps as he watched the progress of that " gloomy pile, tomb of his joys! as he " wandered in the restless agitation of " despairing love amidst those savage " scenes, he has fixed his eye upon that

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" silver orb that now fascinates our gaze,
" and exclaimed, as *I do* now, ' Beautiful
" planet! witness of my passion and my
" woes! here on this spot haply thou shalt
" fling thy beams upon my love, and illu-
" mine her dreary path of midnight medi-
" tation, when far from this abode of peace
" the wretched Abelard, pursued by envy,
" persecuted by malice, shall consume a
" life of wretchedness, for ever lost to love
" and happiness!'" The minstrel, in agi-
tation, paused, and fixed his impassioned gaze on the tearful eyes of Imogen, who with a profound sigh ejaculated, " Alas!
" unhappy Abelard!"

The minstrel took her unresisting hand, and in a softened voice exclaimed: " You
" weep, you sigh; for Abelard's unhappy
" destiny you sigh. Give then, lovely
" maid, thy tears, thy sighs, to me; for
" his sufferings are mine, but not his
" joys. Misery raised not her bitter cup

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" to *his* lip till he had quaffed the rosy " draught of bliss to its last precious drop. " He loved, and was beloved. Destiny " divided him from the object of his ten- " derness, but her passion survived the " power of absence: living he was adored, " and in death united to her. But oh! it " is only for him to complain who has " never felt the transport of reciprocal " passion; whose ardent, glowing feelings " prey on themselves; and whose tender, " impassioned heart is consumed by a " sacred, secret, unrequited love!"

" And is that possible?" said Imogen in a faultering accent; " can a heart, can a " soul, capable of such profound emotion, " such refined tenderness, such delicate " and proud reserve, throb with unrequited " passion?"

" 'Tis for you to decide," said the minstrel, dropping on one knee: " Imogen, " beloved as soon as seen! Imogen, these

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" moments are furtive as they are pre-
" cious; they will admit of no studied
" detail of passion, nor can I tell thee
" aught the sweet intimations of the heart
" have not whispered thee. Perish the
" love that calls on cold formal declara-
" tions to betray its existence! Perish
" those affections which every emotion,
" every glance, every word, does not tes-
" tify! Oh, Imogen, remove that envious
" veil. I ask not for confirmation, but
" for hope; I ask not to violate the reserve
" of thy sacred delicacy, but to suppli-
" cate thy compassion: turn then not
" from me those eyes; let me read in
" them the movements of thy soul, let
" them be the arbiters of my fate, let their
" beams give life to my hopes, or banish
" me from thee for ever!"

The minstrel, with the timid hand of love, drew aside the gauze which veiled the face of Imogen. Then her full eye met

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his, her frame trembled, she leaned on the minstrel's shoulder for support; she wept, but wept delicious tears; and Joy might have purchased with his best smile the sigh that stole from her lip.

The minstrel gazed on her for a moment in speechless extacy, and Silence seemed enamoured of the pause which Rapture had created. Imogen was the first to destroy the sweet illusion: she started from the supporting arm of the minstrel, cast around a quick and fearful glance, then uttered a faint scream, and would have fled. The minstrel's circling arm detained her. "Merciful heaven!" said he; "in a "moment such as this, whence this strong "emotion of terror? Does Imogen re- "pent a condescension too dubious for "even love's ardent wishes to construe "into more than pity?"

"Didst thou not see or hear any thing?" said Imogen trembling.—"What should

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" I see or hear but Imogen? Have I at " this moment a sense, a thought, a feel- " ing, that is not all Imogen?"

" As heaven is my witness, I beheld the " lady Magdelaine and the father director " glide from behind that pillar, and go " out at that door."

" Indeed!" said the minstrel thought- fully.

A faint ejaculation from the novice (who reeled towards a pillar) was all the answer he received; and at the same moment he found himself violently seized by the collar, and surrounded by some of the domestics of the chateau, with the friar and lady Magdelaine, who exclaimed, " Seize the traitor! bear him instantly to " the western tower." The servants obeyed: the minstrel struggled, and op- posed their efforts with Herculean strength; but overcome by numbers, as they tore him away he fixed his eyes on Imogen, (who, the living image of terror, still clung

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to the pillar for support,) and as he passed her, wildly exclaimed: "Heaven guard "and protect thee, thou suffering excel- "lence, from the persecuting spirit of envy "and oppression! and oh!"—Ere he could finish the sentence he was dragged away, and Imogen fell lifeless to the earth.

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CHAP. VIII.

And shall I here abide the shot
Of angry eyes, not comforted to live,
But that there is this jewel in the world
That I may see again?

SHAKSPEARE.

Ah dolente partita
Ah piu dell mia vita
Da te parte, e non-moro, e pur io provo
La pena della morte
E sento nel partire
Un vivace morire;
Ch'ella vita al dolore
Per fa che moja immortalemente il cuore.

INTEREST was in the breast of the father Anselm the universal dissolvent, before which every other passion and sentiment disappeared. Nothing had been further from his mind than to quit the chateau de Montmorell, and leave his young competitor in undisturbed possession of all

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those precious immunities he had himself so long been endowed with; yet still with well-timed policy he secluded himself from the presence of the lady Magdelaine, nor could she obtain from the haughty and self-sufficient priest the audience of a moment, until, returning from vespers, she entreated a moment's conversation with him relative to the circumstances of the morning; and the father, feigning an intention of going that night to a friary of his own order on the skirts of the forest, refused to enter the chateau until he received her promise that the minstrel should be dismissed from it the following morning. But the friar had hitherto only to contend with the head of lady Magdelaine; he had now, for the first time, to enter the lists with her heart; and when a woman' heart is reduced even to the last extremity, her ingenuity seldom fails to bring in a *corps de reserve* to its assistance.

" My dear father," said the lady Mag-

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delaine, " your better judgment is for " once overshot by your unsuspecting " simplicity; far from turning this young " stranger adrift, let us secure him a pri- " soner, until he can make some disco- " very of what he is; for my mind mis- " gives me he is other than his seeming " betokens: times such as these sanction " every suspicion, and—"

The lady Magdelaine made a sudden pause, caught the friar by the arm, and stopped beneath a casement, from whence the minstrel's voice distinctly issued. Five minutes breathless attention to the conversation of the minstrel, which in the stillness of the evening reached her ears, deprived the lady Magdelaine not only of her philosophic coolness, but her christian equanimity. Her sallow cheek glowed with the rage of jealousy, her eyes flashed fire; she hurried into the chateau, followed by the triumphant friar, and as she passed through the great hall, ordered

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some of the domestics to accompany her instantly to the gallery, to seize on the minstrel, and confine him in the western tower till they received further orders. The command was uttered with feudal sternness, and obeyed with feudal exactitude.

The lady Magdelaine retired to her apartment in agitation too evident to escape the observance of the friar, who no longer insisted on going that evening to the friary of the Cistercian brothers.

Neither the discovery of the minstrel at Imogen's feet, which she had herself witnessed, the mortifying blow her vanity had received, nor the arguments of the friar, were sufficient to counteract the partiality which the young secretary had awakened in the heart of his patroness. Her passion, like other propensities of dotage, increased by opposition; and, with a fondness almost childish, grew wayward and testy as its darling wishes were opposed.

The morning after the minstrel's con-

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ment the friar, attended by a number of the domestics, was dispatched to lead the young culprit into the presence of the offended lady, to be tried for the high crime and misdemeanor of preferring youth, beauty, and genius, to age, ugliness, and pedantry; for notwithstanding the well-feigned suspicions by which she meant to temporize with the aversion and prejudice of the friar, the lady Magdelaine had no fault to find with the minstrel, no suspicion to satisfy, save what envy and jealousy gave birth to. Neither the rigid nerves or composed pulses of the philosopheſs could withstand the agitation the expected appearance of the minstrel excited; and footsteps approaching her study-door gave a new throb to her heart, when the friar entered, followed by her other emissaries, who, with countenances full of importance, all seemed eager to speak.

"I congratulate you, madam," said the

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friar: " your dangerous guest is fled. The " criminality of his intentions anticipated " your scrutiny, and he fled from that " retribution his hypocrisy and ingratitude " merited."

" Fled!" repeated the lady Magdelaine, pale with surprise and disappointment; " fled! impossible! the door locked, and " the key in my possession!"

" But the window was but ill-secured," said the friar; " we found one of the bars " wrenched away, and a breach made in the " frame; and though its height is consi- " derable, desperation is not be intimidated " by probable dangers when certain peril " awaits it."—" Besides, with humble de- " ference," said Ambrose, bowing, " there " is no coping with conjuration; and if " this same monsieur troubadour had not " been deep in the black art, he could " never have set our damsels' wits adrift " with his roundelays and romances; nor, " with all humility be it spoken, would he

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" have got into such marvelous great favour
" with my lady, who set her face against
" him, as one may say, from the beginning."

" Peace!" interrupted the lady Magdelaine, glad to have an opportunity of venting her stifled rage on her servants, whom she now accused as the efficient cause of the minstrel's reception at the chateau, and whose negligence had favoured his escape. Then suddenly recollecting herself, she eagerly demanded who had seen the demoiselle Imogen that morning? and, without waiting for an answer, dispatched a messenger for her.

When Imogen had recovered from the state of insensibility into which she had fallen in the gallery, surrounded by darkness, and a prey to the most dreadful impressions, she with difficulty crept to her own apartment, and, flinging herself on her couch, passed the night in that variety of emotion which the circumstances of the evening were calculated to inspire: yet,

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amidst the train of fears, doubts, and apprehensions, that floated on her mind, one smiling sentiment was still buoyant; and to its sweet solace her harassed thoughts still turned for repose, and found felicity supreme and unalloyed. Imogen, the young, the enthusiastic, the sensible, and tender Imogen, loved and was beloved! Could Imogen be otherwise than happy, in spite of the gloomy visions her timid fancy conjured to scare her hopes? Yet the blush which this delicious consciousness brought to her cheek, faded to a death-like paleness when Beatrice, who brought the lady Magdelaine's commanding message, informed her the minstrel had fled.

"Holy Mother! but it is a strange "world!" said Beatrice; "it is, as Am-"brose says, nothing but ups and downs. "Here is the minstrel, that was every "thing yesterday, is nothing to-day. But "they say it was not for nothing either "my lady confined him in the western

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" tower. Some say he was a Hugonot " and an unbeliever, others say he was a " traitor; but most folk seem to think he " was a Jew or conjuror; and Bernardine " swears he heard a clap of thunder, that " shook the whole chateau, just as the " great clock struck twelve; which brings " to my mind the story of the old astro- " loger, who threw himself into the moat. " Thus it was, mademoiselle: It was the " eve of St. Maxima, just after I came " from Provence with my old uncle to the " chateau. I remember I had on my " tawny-orange fardingale, which had been " only once scoured, and"—With a pro- found sigh Imogen interrupted her, to en- quire if lady Magdelaine knew of the minstrel's escape?

" Christ! have I been chattering like a " jay all this time, and quite forgot that " Theodore desired me to tell you, my " lady commands you instantly to the " study. I fancy 'tis about something

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" very extraordinary; so if you will have " the goodness to leave the least bit of the " door open,"—

" Dear Beatrice," said Imogen, in tears, " cannot you make some excuse for me? " Indeed I cannot appear before the lady " Magdelaine."

" Dear mademoiselle, not I; I could " not make an excuse if I was to die for " it; and yet you know I would go to the " end of the world to oblige you."—While Beatrice was still speaking, Theodore himself tapped at the door with a second message; and Imogen, pale and trembling, was forced to obey.

She found the lady Magdelaine alone: who, with a brow contracted by unusual severity, and a voice almost inarticulate from rage, commanded her instantly to relate all the conversation that had passed between the minstrel and her the preceding evening in the gallery; but tears and blushes were all the answer she could obtain.

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" It is then as I suspected," exclaimed the lady Magdelaine; " and a novice of " the holy order of St. Dominick was on " the point of becoming the prey of her " own weak and foolish vanity, and the " artful seductions of a low-born vil- " lain!" She then loudly expatiated on the imprudence, indecorum, and ingratitude of Imogen's conduct; and, hurried away by the influence of jealousy and disappointment, for once descended from the accustomed trope, figure, and metaphor, of her high-flown rhetoric, to speak in the more forcible and poignant language of " a woman scorned;" and, after a reproof and an exordium of an hour long, the all-enduring Imogen was sent back to her room, with the terrific threat of being immediately removed to the convent, and represented in her true colours to the abbess and the nuns.

Happily, however, for the lady Magde-

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laine, her amatory, like her religious propensities, required a visible object to inspire and perpetuate their ardours. Neither her faith nor her love was founded upon those spiritualised sentiments which could enable them to exist in mere conception or belief; and if the picture of a saint was necessary to stimulate her piety, the presence of the young stranger was requisite to perpetuate the tenderness he had awakened. It was not then to be wondered at that in a few days her heart resumed its wonted callosity, the friar his boundless influence; that the foundation of the monastery was again an object of interest, and the Crusades pursued with accustomed vigour. Even Imogen was again reinstated in the honours of the escrutoire, and her profession put off until the Crusades should be finished, which were now hastening to a conclusion; while poor St. Bonaventure claimed his old sta-

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tion, to the discomfiture of Ovid, and the Odes of Sappho were resigned in honour of the Miracles of St. Theresa.

The castle again resumed its wonted tranquil uniformity; and the adventure of the extraordinary stranger, whose presence, like a blazing meteor, spread temporary confusion, amazement, and admiration, was now ranked among the established tales and gossip stories "told by the win-"ter fire," and wondered at as often as told.

Love knows no inequality; it discovers in, or bestows on, its object every thing that excites interest or constitutes perfection. The sympathies of the heart are deaf to the arbitrary suggestions of pride; and even the disadvantages of birth or fortune serve but as *basso relievo*, which raise their possessor superior to destiny, and mark him the favourite of heaven, though reckless of the world's perishable treasures.

Never for a moment had Imogen re-

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flected that the minstrel held a rank in the world, which at that period was neither respected nor eligible; that he was a foundling, a wanderer, and lastly, the hired servant of the lady Magdelaine; still less had she confounded him with the domestics of the chateau. With whom indeed could she assimilate him? for with *her* he held a distinct place in the creation, and from the moment she first beheld him he appeared more than human, and every one else appeared less.

The new, the profound, the sweet emotions, which had influenced the flow and ebb of her reflections during the minstrel's residence at the chateau, now only at intervals thrilled on her heart; while the pensive sadness of disappointed hope, of disappointed love, hung its perpetual gloom o'er the mind, the manners, the brow of the novice: and though constitutional vivacity sometimes lured a smile to her lip, the heart's dejection ever pursued the

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lovely stranger with a tear; and yet, enamoured even of her misery, since it was remotely connected with all she had ever known of bliss, she cherished the source of her affliction, nor would have exchanged her present sufferings for all the calm of her former indifference.

There are rapturous sentiments, rapturous recollections, that can only be too dearly purchased when virtue is the price. Imogen had known them, yet Imogen was innocent; she therefore suffered acutely, but patiently. "And can one so easily "part with what one so dearly loves?" said she one morning, as she sat thinking on the minstrel's sudden flight: "if so, "then it is not love I feel." No witness is requisite to excite the blush of refined sensibility. Imogen started at the thought, which had not escaped her lips, but her heart, and hid her face in her veil, to conceal her blushes even from herself. Then, hurrying from the reflection, she attempted

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to account for that sudden departure of the minstrel, which had awakened it. "Whatever were the accusations," said she, "the lady Magdelaine had to allege "against the amiable young stranger, they "were of a mysterious nature, for they "still remain locked up within her own "breast. Although they must have been "the cause of his departure, yet would I "stake all that is dearest to me on earth "he was innocent; for oh! surely guilt "never hung her gloom on a brow like "his, nor vice polluted the soul of one "whose sentiments breathe the spirit of "virtue!"

This was indeed the conclusion of an inexperienced and enamoured heart; for the sentiments of the genius are not always illustrative of the principles of the man. But Imogen, fertile in excuses to calm those doubts appearances sanctioned of the innocence of him whom it was misery supreme to believe culpable, estab-

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lished the confirmation of her wishes on a stronger foundation: "I have seen little "of the world," said she; "yet, from the "little I have seen, and from all I have "read, I have learnt that happiness and "virtue have no inseparable connection; "that extraordinary merit ever excites "envy, and seldom escapes persecution; "and that the sufferings, the dissensions "of mankind arise less from their vices "than from their errors and prejudices: "else why does the page of history teem "with the virtuous and magnanimous acts "of a few heroic individuals, who lived "but for the good of mankind, and died "the victims of its ingratitude and perse- "cution? Why has philosophy shrunk "beneath the oppression of prejudiced "ignorance, and genius, unnoticed and "unknown, pined in want and lived in "wretchedness? Alas! it is not requisite "to be criminal to suffer the punishment "due to vice."

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The minstrel was therefore not only innocent but injured; and this self-drawn conclusion shed a new interest o'er that he had already awakened, and turned another ligament round the heart of Imogen. That warm and tender heart now reposed all its hopes of happiness on either hearing from the object of its secret homage, or in sketching such wild and fanciful plans of future bliss as the young imagination loves to colour with its warmest tints. Each day as it fled left behind it a new shade of regret in the spirits of the novice, for every day and every hour fancy promised some tidings of the minstrel; and the heart, willingly receiving the grateful illusion, expiated its credulity by the pangs of consequent disappointment.

Sometimes, hurried away by the vivacity of her wishes, she would ascend the ramparts of the castle, full of vague expectations that the first object that would salute her eye from the plain below would be the

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minstrel himself, returning with full power to clear his character from every aspersion, and reinstate himself in the favour of lady Magdelaine; but after a long, eager gaze, the desolation of civil war gave no object to her view but ruined villages, uncultivated fields, or fugitive peasants, flying for security to the impervious wilds of the forest, and distant parties of the military, which overran the provinces in every direction; and if their picturesque appearance as they scoured those once smiling scenes they had desolated, their beamy spears, shining armour, and waving plumes, amused her imagination, her heart denied its interest; and among the tears which stained her cheek for her own private sufferings, one drop ennobled their source for her country's woes!

One evening, returning from the ramparts, she passed near the door of the apartment once occupied by the minstrel, and heard, or fancied she heard, the tones

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of his harp, as she was wont when in a still evening he played at his open casement. At first she deemed it but an illusion of her senses; but as she approached, the sound more distinctly caught her ear. Panting and breathless with indescribable emotion, she ventured to open the door, and beheld——the page, seated at the foot of the bed, and playing on the minstrel's harp. At the sight of Imogen he started, blushed, and rose to lay by the instrument. Imogen, disappointed she knew not why, and blushing she knew not wherefore, apologised for her intrusion, and said with a smile:

"I did not know thou wert a musician, "Theodore."

"Nor am I, mademoiselle; but it is na- "tural to imitate what we admire."

"Oh most natural," sighed Imogen.

"I envied the minstrel for many rea- "sons," said Theodore, casting down his eyes, "and not a little for his charming

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" musical talent. I have listened to him " of a fine night, when he played on the " terrace under your window, until I wept " like an infant. It is strange, made- " moiselle, that one should weep as much " from pleasure as from pain; nay, some- " times more."

" Such tears are delicious!" said Imogen, gazing on the harp, over which the page leaned.

" Yes," said Theodore, answering her looks, " this was his harp; and there," pointing to the bed, " lies his minstrel's " habit, which my lady made him lay aside " when he exchanged his minstrelsy for " a clerkship."

" And to whom do they now belong?" said Imogen eagerly.

" His dress has remained here unno- " ticed, just, I believe, as he flung it " himself the morning of the night he " was taken a prisoner to the western " tower."

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"Himself!" said Imogen with emotion, taking up the sleeve of the doublet.

"Yes," said the page; "it has not "been removed since he slept here. This "part of the castle is seldom frequented; "and the domestics, who fancied the min- "strel a magician, believe there is some "dangerous spell over the room: so it is "never visited by any one save myself."

"And the harp?" said Imogen.

"Oh, true, mademoiselle, the harp—is "mine."

"Did he give it to you, Theodore?"

"Why, mademoiselle," said the page hesitating, "I did him a service, and he, "in return, presented me with this in- "strument; the only recompence I would "receive, or I believe he had to offer."

"And may I ask what that service "was?"

"Nay, mademoiselle, you must pardon "me," said the page, changing colour; "it is of a nature not to be mentioned.

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" Would he had his harp again, and I—!" The page stopped abruptly.

" Would you part with the harp?" said Imogen, with affected indifference.

" Would you wish for it, mademoi-
" selle?" said the page, with a penetrating smile.

" If you would, suffer me to become a
" purchaser," said Imogen blushing.

" Perhaps," said the young page, casting down his eyes, " you would think me
" too exorbitant; and I should be apt to
" demand more than you would be willing
" to grant."

" Rather say, Theodore, more than I
" possess."

" Not so, mademoiselle; you are rich.
" Oh! how rich in all"—

" Your terms?" said Imogen with impatience.

" One kiss of that fair hand."

" A kiss of the hand!" said Imogen with a smile, and blushing. " Nay, Theo-

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" dore, I must not take advantage of your " gallantry." Then holding out her little purse, which contained some valuable coins presented to her by the minor canoness, she added, " Will you for the present ac- " cept of this, till— ?"

" Holy Mother!" interrupted the page; " not for the world! SELL the harp! and " to you! not for the world! Ah! made- " moiselle, how little do you know—!" Then pausing, abruptly he added, after a moment's confusion and silence, " Shall I " convey it to your apartment?"

" Not," said Imogen, " until you suffer " me to fasten this round your neck," drawing from her own a silver reliquary. The young page, colouring with pleasure, kneeled to receive it. " It was given me " by the lady abbess," said Imogen, while she fastened it round his neck, " when I " left the convent, as a charm against " every danger; and since," she added with an arch smile, " you seem so obsti-

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" nately to adhere to your first terms,
" why I believe I must give you the kiss
" of the hand into the bargain." The page suddenly dropped the reliquary, which he was on the point of raising to his lip, and substituted the extended hand of Imogen.

" Ah!" said the delighted boy, " I feel
" the charm your precious gift contains is
" not proof against *every* danger!"

At night she flew to her little apartment, as if the sweet inducement of a friend's welcome awaited her. Theodore, as he had promised, had left the harp there; and Imogen pressed its chords, not only with her fingers but her lips, while a refined regret insinuated itself into her mind that the page had touched those strings she would wish to believe had last confessed the minstrel's magic touch.

Some little skill on the lute, communicated by the sister Pasiphaë, and a knowledge of the science of music almost in-

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tuitive, assisted her in her progress on an instrument whose soft and plaintive tones were well adapted to the rich and various melody of her fine voice. Music soon became her only amusement, and the remoteness of her apartment favoured its pursuit unknown to lady Magdelaine. Music raised in her soul that delirium of extacy she was so organized to feel; and in repeating those passages which had most charmed her in the minstrel's performance, the memory of past joys awakened to the sound. The associating principle that existed between the feelings and the sense exerted its influence, and the harmony that charmed the ear gave a thrill of rapture to the heart.

The third month which followed the minstrel's departure dissolved the last fond waking dream which had hitherto flattered the hopes of Imogen; and the belief that she had been deceived equally by her own credulity and the minstrel's professions,

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took possession of a mind too proud, too delicate, not to agonize to the conviction. The flush of her lively sensations gradually subsided, and every degree of their progressive extinction was marked by a regret that she had been deluded into a sense of bliss that almost expired in its birth, and left behind it many a sweet and poignant recollection, to add a deeper shade of contrast on the *sullen doom* that awaited her. To that keen vivacity of emotion which lately agitated her bosom, succeeded the pensive, settled gloom, which so frequently takes possession of the delicate and refined mind in its transition from suspense animated by hope to hopeless certainty. Yet not alone the disappointment of a first-awakened passion produced the despondency which seized her heart, and clouded the frolic spirit of her native disposition. Hitherto the impossibility of their attainment stifled in her bosom those vague and scarcely understood ideas which pointed to

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society and the world. The narrow limits of that sphere she had moved in, the chill austerity of her associates, by suppressing even a hope of emancipation, reduced her to a tranquil acquiescence to a destiny equally uncongenial to her reason and her sentiments. But her intercourse with the minstrel had not only awakened a new sense of happiness in her breast; it called forth those talents which, reflected back in his praise, shone with a splendour too dazzling for the gloom of privacy and sequestration; it had roused the dormant ambition of her soul to reach that point of elevation she had been from her cradle anxious to obtain; and it confirmed those long-nourished and increasing suggestions of reason, that the profession for which she was destined was equally inimical to religion and morality, to the intentions of Providence, and the welfare of society, and which would for ever annihilate her happiness, without repaying the sacrifice

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by those illusions which satisfy the mind of ignorance, credulity, and superstition, for all the solid and beneficial realities it has forfeited. Add to all this, the spirit of romance ruled the mind of Imogen with no trivial influence. She lived in an age when the fantastic goddess shed her illusions over the world, and established a sovereign empire which required the united efforts of genius and reason to undermine. The warm and lively imagination of the young novice was well adapted to receive the "bright enthusiast's" inspirations, and to pursue her rapid flights and wildest fancies beyond the sober boundaries of probability, beyond the guardian wing of safety.

An elopement from the chateau had therefore long been the object of her meditation, ere her return to the convent of St. Dominick prohibited every hope of escape. "Reason, happiness, even virtue "itself," said Imogen, "sanctions the in-

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" tention, though a desperate one;" while Love, in league with Fancy, lay laughing *perdu* in a corner of her heart at the sober names given to his suggestions.

But in her plan of escape Imogen had neither end nor object; but then she had delightful adventures, novel situations, and interesting circumstances in abundance. Love too sketched out (by fond association) the character she should assume to effect her purpose; it was that of a young wandering musician. " What a sweet, sweet " character!" said Imogen, with a sigh and a smile; and chance furnished her with a disguise, for the minstrel's habit still lay in the unfrequented chamber, and, like precious relics, daily received a visit from a votarist of no lukewarm devotion.

" My motive," said Imogen, " is war- " rantable in the eye of heaven and of na- " ture. I will not violate the altar of the " Deity by vows my heart disowns, my " reason condemns. That heart tells me

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" it can never renounce the ties, the af-
" fections of humanity; that reason dis-
" approves it ever should; and until I can
" believe a life useless to my fellow-crea-
" tures can be pleasing in the eye of my
" God I will never embrace it: there re-
" mains therefore no other alternative but
" to fly from the fate that awaits me."

Unprotected, innocent, unfriended orphan! whither wouldst thou fly? what asylum opens to receive thee? what fond arms unfold to embrace thee? where wilt thou find a tender bosom on which to repose thy aching temples; where wilt thou find an affectionate heart to sooth the sufferings thine own has encountered? The world is indeed " all before thee where to " chuse," but who will confirm that choice? who will realize the fairy visions of thy sanguine expectations?

It was thus Experience should have addressed the novice: but the novice was but just eighteen; the fire of imagination, the

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illusions of fancy, the spirit of genius, all bewildered her senses, animated her mind, and, amidst their seducing admonitions, the "still small voice" of Experience was unheard. Oh youth! season of delight, sweet era of premature immortality! what is there in the sober satisfaction, the cautious comforts, and solid certainties of age, to compensate for the loss of thy golden dreams? dreams which memory cherishes with enthusiasm, and after-life glances back on with a faint thrill of that rapture ye once bestowed. Hope! genius! virtue! 'tis in the genial bosom of youth your fairest, loveliest blossoms blow and flourish!

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CHAP. IX.

Friendship makes the rights of its objects equally matters of regard with its own; and marks a mind that is innocent, candid, liberal, and susceptible of the virtues which insure the happiness of human nature.

BRUCE'S *Elements of the Science of Ethics.*

These are thinking heretics;
I should forgive them, did some upstart sect
With sharper rigours charm this headlong zeal;
But they in soothe must reason

WALPOLE.

HOWEVER romantically venturous the mind of Imogen, it required some desperate circumstance to animate her to the execution of those visionary plans her fancy had so often sketched, her reason still refused to ratify.

Contemptuous silence, or bigoted exhortation on the part of the friar; sharp reproof, or oblique sarcasm on that of the

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lady Magdelaine; with wearisome conversations on the party and religious jargon of the day; the mystery of a vision, or the miracle of a saint; the claims of the duke de Mayenne, or the heresy of the king; included the whole system of social intercourse at the chateau de Montmorell; and furnished daily aggravation to confirm the young novice in the only scheme by which she could escape the apathy of her present life, or the gloomy destiny that awaited her future. But a circumstance now occurred to steady those wavering resolutions which had long vibrated between the ardour of her wishes and the strength of her apprehensions. The Crusades were finished: nothing prevented lady Magdelaine's visiting Paris, but the unsettled state of the times, in order to send her work to the press: and the day of Imogen's return to the convent of St. Dominick was already fixed on. The lady Magdelaine, as a proof of her munificence and piety, was to pay

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down a large sum on the admission of her amanuensis among the holy sisterhood; and on the day of her profession, to present the convent with a rich set of altar plate. Thus the lady Magdelaine, by a stroke of sanctimonious policy, in rewarding the arduous services of her secretary, remitted a douceur to heaven, in part payment for the price of her own salvation!

There was nothing talked of at the convent but the pious zeal, and holy munificence of the lady de Montmorell; and the young novice was supposed to enter the sacred pale under the most favourable auspices. The young novice, however, was of a different opinion; with a spirit of independence that electrified the narrow minds of her patroness and the friar, she absolutely refused the offered donation of lady Magdelaine on her own account.

"If, madam," said she one day, as the lady Magdelaine and the father director were enumerating the benefits she would

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derive from entering the convent on such respectable terms, and furnishing many arguments to stimulate her gratitude: "if, "madam, it is for my sake you are thus "generous, oh, for my sake, direct your "generosity in a better channel. The or- "der of St. Dominick is the most opulent "in France, and the serfs on the skirts of "the forest de Montmorell, the most "wretched; oppressed by famine, by all "the horrors of civil war, they languish in "misery and want, while safety and abund- "ance reign in the convent of Saint "Dominick. Let then, madam, those "wretches, who look up to you for assist- "ance, feel that bounty it were the mock- "ery of religion to bestow on those who, "professing poverty, revel in opulence. "Save me from a life for which I feel no "vocation, for which I am unworthy; "and suffer me to continue the most faith- "ful of your servants, the most grateful "of your friends."

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" I understand you," said the lady Mag-
" delaine with a sarcastic sneer: " suffer
" you to accompany me to Paris, and
" prove your pious fortitude, by exposing
" you to the trials of temptation. No,"
said the lady Magdelaine, " if by my
" precepts or example I cannot lure a
" wandering soul to heaven, St. Dominick
" forbid I should assist in drawing a soul
" from it."

" Mother of God, avert that crime!"
said the friar, crossing himself; " and thou,
" oh perverse of spirit, it now becomes *us*,
" who took thee from the church's guardian
" wing, in sacred trust, to give thee back
" as we received thee. Thou wert then a
" very saint forsooth, nor could thy piety
" be coped withal; miracles were expected
" to be performed at thy shrine, and thy
" name to be enrolled in the *album sanc-*
" *torum* of perfection! but now! oh, sad
" frailty of poor human nature! thou art
" little better than one of the wicked. But

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" thou art young, and hast time for amend-
" ment; thou hast the examples of thirty
" kings and queens, who resigned the
" crown and sceptre for the veil and cro-
" zier; and, once wedded to an heavenly
" spouse, dedicated to the embraces of a
" superior being, thy groveling soul *shall*
" rise above all human passions; and after
" a life of piety, self-denial, and mortifica-
" tion, you will have a chance of dying in
" a religious rapture, or haply of being
" added to the list of holy saints!"

" The *list of martyrdom* you mean, fa-
" ther," said Imogen, with a flash of her wonted playful spirits.

" Martyrdom to thy sinful propensities," said the lady Magdelaine, who, in conjunction with the father, continued an exordium of more than an hour long, on the wickedness of all human affections, worldly attachments, and mortal passions; substituting invective for argument, and severity for admonition; till Imogen, wearied be-

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yond all power of farther endurance, burst into tears, and exclaimed; "Spare, spare "me now, madam, and do with me "as you please." The lady Magdelaine, who trembled lest the loss of a soul should be laid to her account, and who was enraged at the spirited opposition of Imogen, now willingly believed her eloquence had effected a reformation, and that the tears of the novice flowed

> "From a heart contrite, in sign
> Of sorrow unfeign'd and humiliation meek."
>
> MILTON.

And a few incorrect chapters being yet to transcribe, the lady Magdelaine informed her she was not to return to the convent till that day week; and dismissed her with a gentleness to which she was little accustomed.

The convent of St. Dominick lay something less than half a league from the chateau; the path which led to it was wild

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and romantic; it was in her leisure hours a favourite walk with Imogen, and her visits to Saint Dominick were almost as frequent as her walks; for the only friend her heart had ever acknowledged, the minor canoness, was fast verging on eternity; and the friendship, the tenderness, the compassion of the novice, led her incessantly to the couch of the dying nun.

Lady Magdelaine encouraged these visits, and the abbess and the nuns received her with a cordiality that induced her to repeat them; while the minor canoness seemed to receive pleasure only through the medium of her cheering society: yet in all these visits, when confidence was most boundless, when the sanguine and ingenuous character of the novice lay bare and exposed to the penetrating eye of the canoness, and when their sentiments and opinions were discussed with mutual freedom; still, in the most concealed sanctuary of her bosom, reposed the secret of

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Imogen's heart. The adventures of the minstrel had reached the anxious enquiries of the curious nuns, and the minor canoness, who was ever prompt to ridicule and condemn the tittle-tattle propensities of the sisterhood, looked on it as one of their tales of wonder, nor even put Imogen's traiterous feelings to the test by an enquiry on the subject.

Imogen, who trembled lest the tenderness of her heart was but its weakness, and who dreaded the sarcastic raillery, as much as she venerated the virtue, and admired the brilliant talents of the canoness, hugged herself on her fortunate reserve, and felt proportionable courage to reveal to her, her long cherished intention of avoiding a religious life by flight; since she could not be supposed to be influenced in her dangerous attempt by the weakness of passion rather than the conviction of reason.

Three weeks had elapsed since a close attendance in the study of lady Magdelaine

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had allowed her to visit the convent: on the evening of the day the above conversation took place, she obtained permission to visit the sister Pasiphae, and remain with her that night.

Accompanied by one of lady Magdelaine's women, she set out on her little pedestrian journey; and during its performance determined on acquainting the canoness with her resolution, to profit by her advice, and be decided by her opinion; while she thought she knew enough of the nun to believe she would applaud her determination, and probably assist her to realize it.

When she reached the convent, she found the nuns at vespers, all but the sister Pasiphea, who was now wholly confined to her cell; and when Imogen entered it she beheld her reclined on her couch, and apparently wrapped in a soft repose. Imogen crept towards her, and started with emotion as she observed the visible change

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which had taken place in her friend since she had last beheld her: her form seemed almost transparent, and to the gaze of the novice appeared little more than a beautiful anatomy; from her closed eye stole a tear, which glittered on a cheek white and polished as Parian marble; on her pale lip played a smile which, like that tear, seemed the extatic offspring of her dream's bright vision. The sun, as it set opposite to the narrow casement of her cell, flushed a rosy tint on her snowy drapery, and tinged her whole form with something more than human. One skeleton hand was spread on her bosom, the other rested on her lute, which lay against the couch: suddenly her seraph smile disappeared, her tear dried on her burning cheek, her countenance became convulsed, her frame shook almost to dissolution; she panted, struggled, and with a shriek that seemed to burst her heart, threw herself out of the bed. The arms of the trembling, and scarcely less

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agitated Imogen, received her, on whose face she fixed a wild and eager gaze; then sighing, and with a look of affectionate recognition, pressed her hand and faintly exclaimed; "Oh, how welcome is the "sight of thee! thy eye alone beams "peace and youthful joy; thy presence, "only, cheers my drooping spirit!"

Imogen, weeping, raised her on her couch, and kneeling beside her, pressed her hand with her lips.

"How warm," said the nun, "is the "pressure of thy lips, and how soothingly "grateful thy tears: may they never flow "but for the sorrows of another!" then shuddering, and with a look of wildness, she added, "oh, it was such a dream! so "sweet, and yet so dreadful!"

"Methought indeed it was," said Imogen; "for while I watched thee as thou "slept, thy countenance exhibited such "strong emotion."

"And oh, well it might," said the nun

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emphatically, " for that dream contained " the epitome of my life: Imogen, I fan- " cied myself in that sweet era of exist- " ence, when love and hope and every joy " runs high; when pleasure turned her " rosy wreathes round my polished brow, " and guileless rapture thrilled on every " sense. Seated amidst the embowering " shades of my sweet paternal home, I " beheld at my feet the object of my " heart's idolatry; I felt the pressure of " his lip on my trembling hand, and my " ears drank the welcome sound, that in " one short week death only could divide " us. Suddenly the scene was changed, and " instead of the groves of Provence, I " found myself in the great court of the " Louvre in Paris; all was darkness and " desolation! save when the lightning's " flash gave to my eye the mangled forms " of dying men, or bands of murderers, " plunging their reeking daggers into the " bosoms of unresisting victims. Prostrate

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" to the earth, I invoked the protection of
" St. Bartholomew, whose festival it was:
" methought I beheld him on every side
" succouring the oppressed and rescuing
" the wounded; but when his eye beamed
" full on me, it was my love; I sprung
" forward and found safety in his arms;
" I felt the soft pressure of his embrace,
" I felt his tender sigh on my cheek and
" his warm tears on my lip. At that mo-
" ment a ghastly band rushed forward, they
" plunged their daggers in the bosom of my
" love; they dragged me from that bleed-
" ing bosom, and threw me headlong into a
" dreary vault, where reposed the moulder-
" ing bones of St. Dominick; then, as the
" monument closed o'er my head, me-
" thought I did perceive those murderers
" were my brothers!"

" God of heaven!" said Imogen, shud-
dering, " and is this the epitome of thy
" life?" The nun folded her hands on her
bosom, cast up her eyes to heaven, and

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gently waved her head, while the tears fell in large drops down her pale face.

At that moment a group of the nuns entered the cell; although they came to make enquiries for the health of the sister Pasiphea, they all circled round Imogen as soon as they perceived her, and, in spite of the weakness of the poor invalid, were clamorous in those numerous and simple questions, their insatiate curiosity, and eternal sameness of life, rendered interesting. Imogen having satisfied them as far as lay in her power, they turned the conversation to all that had occurred at vespers; talked of father Phillips having made a most risible mistake, of the awkwardness of the officiating nun, and the old sister Urselin's having fallen asleep in the middle of a jubilitate, and awakening chaunted the service of the dead; then having exhausted all their flippant nothings, they wished the wearied canoness a good night, and took

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Imogen with them to pay her respects to the abbess.

As soon as the novice got liberated from the tedious homilies and drowsy exordiums of the holy mother, she flew back to the canoness: she found her something more composed, and seated at a small table on which her lamp burnt, while one of the lay sisterhood arranged her bed. She received Imogen with a melancholy smile, and welcomed her return. "I have ob-" tained permission," said the novice, "to " take possession of sister Mary's mattress, " by your bed-side, if she has no objec-" tion." "None in the world," said the sister significantly, happy to be dismissed from her nightly attendance which the weakness of the invalid required.

When they were alone, Imogen entered on the subject which had brought her to the convent: she unfolded to the canoness the gradual progress of her ideas; she compared her present sense of religion

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with that in which she had been brought up; she candidly confessed her horror of convent life, and her resolution to avoid it: "yet," added Imogen, "as you alone "opposed the fanaticism of my infant pre- "judices, as you alone shed a beam upon "my mind, which has never since been "obscured, but spread its light with in- "creasing brightness, to you only do I "confide the sentiments of that mind, and "the resolution they have inspired."

The canoness listened to her in extreme emotion, and fixing her large black eyes on her face said, with a flash of her wonted animation; "So, my young saint! you "have at last discovered there are some "*spots* in our feasts of charity?" Then assuming a tone grave and impressive, she affectionately took Imogen's hand and continued: "My dear child, there are certain "principles, which the very constitution "of our natures lead us to receive; immut- "able truths, which come home with re-

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" sistless force to every bosom; and though
" obscured by those prejudices born amidst
" the profound ignorance of early ages,
" confirmed by time, and that passive in-
" dolence by which men take up their
" opinions upon trust, and avoid the trou-
" ble of thinking for themselves, yet the
" human mind, in its progressive state, is
" still propelled towards perfection, and
" gradually shakes off its errors. In the
" words of an Italian poet:

> ' Come d'autunno le foglie
> L'uno apresso delle altra infin che'l tamo
> Prinde alla terra tutte le sue spoglie.'*

" All therefore that you have now related
" to me of the change which has taken
" place in your sentiments, pleases without
" amazing me; since it confirms what I
" have always believed, that reason, when
" suffered to take its course, will ever con-

---

* Dante, Inferno.

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" firm the universal principles of truth and
" nature, and distinguish, amidst the va-
" rious documents of human education,
" the good from the bad; adhering with
" firmness to the former, and rejecting the
" latter with humility.

" When in thy infant years I beheld
" thee, and all thy blooming virtues, sacri-
" ficed at the sanguinary altar of fanati-
" cism, I pitied thee; when in the cloi-
" sters of Saint Dominick I beheld the
" proud ambition of genius soaring beyond
" the narrow limits of destiny, I admired
" thee: and now, that I find thy reason
" asserting its rights, thy nature recoiling
" from the barbarous distinctions created
" by perverted religion, not by the spirit
" of true holiness, from the horrors of fa-
" naticism, from the errors of superstition,
" I revere thee.

" But here my commendations end; for
" here the wondrous strength of thy
" mind ceases to operate, and the sugges-

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" tions of a wild romantic imagination " guide thy efforts: elope! whither, where, " to whom, by what means, and for what " end?"

" Alas," said Imogen sighing, " that I " never thought of: but of this I am cer- " tain, a fate more dreadful than now " awaits me I cannot encounter."

" Thou sayest true," said the nun emphatically; " my heart can best aver " how fatally true! But is there, my sweet " imprudent, no medium between certain " and probable destruction; is there no " friend to save thee from immolation?"

" On earth" said Imogen, embracing the canoness's knees, " I own no friend " but thee."

The nun, bending forward, folded her arms around her, and let fall a tear on her cheek. " That tear," said Imogen, as it mingled with her own, " is my assurance " thou wilt assist me to escape the doom " that awaits me; wilt thou not?"

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" And it is to me," said the nun, raising and embracing her, " to me thou dost " apply for relief; to me who have sworn " on the altar of my God, to violate every " law, human and divine, he has implant- " ed in my breast, to obliterate the affec- " tions he has braced on my soul, and to " render others as wretched, were that " possible, as myself: knowest thou not " that I am bound to destroy, to abhor, " all who dare think differently from the " way I have been taught myself to think, " and that I should deliver thee over to " inquisitorial horrors, rather than by com- " miserating thy fate sanction thy apos- " tacy ?"

" Alas," said Imogen trembling, as the lamp's blue flame flashed in the wild and convulsed countenance of the nun, " alas, " if you desert me, then am I a wretch " indeed !"

" Desert thee !" said the nun recover- ing, and with an air of tenderness, " de-

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" sert thee, thou sweet victim, never! yet " the world deserted *me* when at thy age; " with all thy warm and social affections, " I was entombed within this convent; " here withered the bloom of my heart's " first love; here died my hopes, never to " live again!" Then taking a medallion from her bosom, and touching a spring, it flew open, and presented to the eye of Imogen two beautiful portraits: "Behold," continued the nun, " this fair representa- " tive of youth and vivacity; such once " was Pasiphea, and this beautiful and " manly countenance was——" The nun paused, and for a moment concealed her face in her veil; then with less emotion continued; " The chevalier de Sorvell and " Rosalie de Vilette, after an attachment " of some years, founded on a sympathy " of talent and pursuit, received the sanc- " tion of their friends to their union. The " brothers of Rosalie, high in favour with " Charles IX., were implicated in the hor-

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" rors of St. Bartholomew, and became
" the avenging ministers of their diaboli-
" cal monarch: at the moment that De
" Sorvell, like the Spirit of Mercy, flew
" from side to side, protecting, rescuing,
" and consoling the persecuted hugonots,
" in snatching a victim from the uplifted
" arm of the fanatic De Vilette, De Sorvell
" received a wound in his own bosom, re-
" ceived it, oh God! in the sight of Ro-
" salie. That moment gave birth to mad-
" ness; and when, after a long, long ob-
" livion to her woes, the wretched Rosalie
" recovered her reason, she found herself
" transformed into the sister Pasiphea of
" St. Dominick! but I pain thy kind
" heart."

" Nay, in sweet pity, continue," said the weeping novice.

" Alas! I have only to add, that my
" brother's death speedily followed my re-
" covery, and that De Sorvell still lives;

" but oh! lives not for me!" The nun then, after a long pause, added: " And " thinkest thou I will not make an effort " to save thee from that fate that impends " o'er thee? Indeed I will. After an " absence of twenty years from the world, " it contains but one being whom I can " call friend. You once saw her at the " parlour grate, when she came from Paris " to visit me, at a time when I was on the " point of dissolution."

" I do remember well," said Imogen, " the lady de Rosemont, to whom, at your " desire, I carried a rich casket, and who " rewarded my trouble by such grateful " commendation as pleased my childish " vanity."

" The same; the amiable sister of the " lover of Rosalie de Vilette. To her I " will commend thee, and she, for my " sake, and when I shall be no more, will " protect thee. But hark! the bell tolls

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" twelve; retire thee now to rest, and by " to-morrow I shall have fixed on some " plan for thee to pursue."

Imogen, who wept tears of joy, loaded the canoness with her affectionate and grateful caresses, embraced her knees, and kissed her hands a thousand times, while she earnestly entreated to be allowed to sit up with her till she should herself be inclined to retire to rest; but the canoness said she had some papers to arrange, and that it was never her custom to go to rest till some hours after midnight. Imogen, fearing to be intrusive, threw herself on the mattress; and, wearied by her long walk and her various emotions, soon fell into a soft and sweet repose.

The dawn was just glancing through the casement, and the bell tolling for matins, when Imogen from dreams of ideal bliss awakened, and beheld the canoness still seated at the table: her arm supported her head, and her lamp burning dimly before

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her. The novice arose, and tenderly hinted her suggestions that she had not taken any repose; when, looking beneath the black veil that shaded her face, she was shocked to behold the visible change which had taken place in it since the preceding night. The hollow eyes of the nun were inflamed and red with weeping, the snowy whiteness of her complexion was changed to a deadly sallow, and her voice was hollow and inarticulate. After swallowing a draught prescribed by the physician of the convent she appeared more composed, read over with great earnestness a letter that lay on the table, then folded and directed it to the chevalier de Sorvell. As she wrote the name, Imogen, who looked over her shoulder, saw the tears efface the letters almost as fast as they were written. The canoness then took up another letter, and presented it to Imogen to read: it was addressed to *madame de Rosmont*, and almost wholly related to Imogen, who was men-

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tioned in a manner that called a blush into her cheek as she perused the commendations of one whose esteem she so dearly prized; but the concluding lines paled that blush, and the tears of mourning friendship succeeded to the glow of self-satisfaction as she read the following passage:

"Friend of my life, farewell! That "life, which your friendship alone ren- "dered worthy of supporting, hastens "with rapid flight to its last sad hour. "My existence for these last two years "has been a miracle to all, to myself a "burthen. A protracted being has been "the expiation of my sins; and death, "like a welcome, long-expected friend, "lures me to those joys life denied me. "When you will receive this, I shall pro- "bably be no more. The dim eye, whose "weak and imperfect vision scarce views "these characters I trace; the trembling "and skeleton hand that with difficulty "guides my pen; and those confused

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"and incoherent thoughts that rather "confound than dictate the heart's still "glowing wishes; all sadly coincide with "those internal principles of decay which "have long been stealing me to the grave. "The young novice will give thee a small "packet, to be delivered to thy brother: "it contains his picture, and the letter he "addressed some fifteen years ago to the "minor canoness of St. Dominick: it "contains also a few lines, not from the "fond Rosalie de Villette, but the dying "Pasiphaë. Yet, if over these few lines "some faint beam of love's decaying fire "sheds its lingering glow, and the wo-"man's treacherous heart betrays its weak-"ness even in the hour of awful dissolu-"lution, oh! let them not meet his eye, "lest he, who towers above mortality, "perceive how distant he has left me in "virtue's steep ascent! Yet I *had a mind* "that would have gone goal for goal with "his, but that my heart lacked strength:

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" but now all is over, and death will soon " accomplish what reason and philosophy " could not; for De Sorvell will cease to " be beloved when Rosalie shall cease to " live. Once more, farewell for ever!"

" For ever!" faintly articulated Imogen, concealing her face in her veil, then throwing her arms round the man, sobbed aloud upon her bosom.

" My dear child," said the canoness in great emotion, but too weak to weep, " this is too much! Spare me, spare thy- " self, nor let us by vain regrets occupy " the precious time which should be de- " voted to saving thee from that fate which " at thy age consigned me to misery! " And trust me, sweet maid, that after a " long, long exclusion from the happiness " of serving a fellow-creature, the idea of " snatching you from—oh wretchedness " supreme!—a living death, will shed a " cheering ray upon my life's sad close; " and, like a smiling cherub, hover round

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" my heart till its last vital pulse shall cease
" to play, then mingle with the joys of
" opening heaven!

" Nay, hear me out, while I have
" strength to speak. The mode of thy
" escape alone perplexes me with obstacles.
" To-day I shall see a person, on whom I
" think I may confide, and whose services
" I have a right to claim: mean time re-
" turn thou to the chateau De Montmo-
" rell, and obtain permission to come to-
" morrow evening to the convent at the
" hour of vespers. I know thou hast long
" been the instrument of our superior's
" sanctimonious avarice, who thinks by
" thy means to secure some rich donations
" to the convent from thy patroness, there-
" fore is she impatient for thy return;
" and the lady Magdelaine, who has long
" trembled for her own salvation through
" thy apostacy, will be as anxious to en-
" tomb thee here as the abbess. You
" must escape their vigilance, and not de-

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" pend on their generosity for your eman-
" cipation; for these women, who possess
" zeal without truth, and faith without
" virtue, will make it a merit in the eye of
" heaven to force thee into that mode of
" thinking which, professing themselves
" from prejudice and fear, not conviction,
" empowers them to shut or open the
" gates of heaven as their own bigoted
" wills decree. Oh! they know not, they
" feel not, that the bond of true religion,
" like heaven's own goodness, should be
" unlimitable, and enclose within its circle
" all mankind. Religion is to them a
" little code of local ceremonies, drawn up
" by human invention of the lowest order,
" of useless mysteries and childish bug-
" bears, set to puzzle, not to convince;
" made to terrify, not to instruct. But
" thou, with whom religion is but a better
" name for happiness and virtue, mayest
" thou escape that bondage with which the
" zeal of false devotion would fetter all

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" thy blooming virtues! Yet think not " that thou wilt leave all bigotry behind " thee when thou fliest from a convent. " Oh no! it is an hardy plant, and thrives " in every soil, save in that where true re- " ligion only flourishes. 'Tis not beneath " the cowl and scapular alone self-wrapt, " illiberal prejudice veils its deformity: it " finds protection in every *sect*; for each " believes itself alone the true, seizes with " sacrilegious hand the apostolic key of " paradise, and flings beyond salvation all " who can't believe the dogmas it holds " out."

The nun then, after a moment's pause, continued: " Lest my fading recollection " should totally desert me, I will make " what little arrangement I can at the pre- " sent moment." Then taking out her own picture from the case Imogen had seen the night before, she placed in it the note directed to the chevalier De Sorvell, and fixed her eyes on his portrait for a consi-

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derable time, till her hand trembled so she could scarcely hold it. In a hurried manner she attempted to close the case, but finding the effort too much she exclaimed; "It will not be!" and put it into Imogen's hands, who fastened it. "Conceal it "carefully," said the nun, turning away her head, "and give it with that letter to "the lady De Rosemont."

Imogen put them both in her bosom. "This ring," said the nun, after a long pause, in which she seemed to struggle for composure, taking a rich diamond from a casket, "was given me by a dying mo-"ther." Then kissing it and bathing it with her tears, she placed it on Imogen's finger. "Wear it," said she, "for the sake "of her unfortunate daughter: and here "is a small purse of gold; thou wilt need "it, my poor little wanderer; nor wilt "thou refuse it from one whose wish to "serve thee is indeed great, but that her "will lacks means." Imogen looked at

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the ring, then at the purse, then in the face of the canoness; and, falling at her feet, folded her hands in her's, pressed them to her lips, and dewed them with her tears, in all that vivacity of motion and gesture the child of nature only possesses. 'An honest heart has no feeling so strong 'as gratitude, and a liberal one none so 'strong as the delicacy with which it re-'ceives it.' What a beautiful illustration of this just and elegant maxim was the canoness and the novice at that moment! The countenance of Imogen, as her face was raised towards the nun, beamed with all the energy of her grateful feelings; in the tender but half-averted glance of Pasiphaë was registered the meek delicacy with which it was received, not refusing, yet denying a claim to it.

"I have done nothing," said the canoness, raising the novice, "but what you "can repay a thousand fold by conducting "yourself with prudence, and by restrain-

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" ing that romantic turn of mind which " is so great an enemy to the circumspec- " tion you should observe." The canoness then requested her to return to the chateau, lest their conference should awaken suspicion; and Imogen had only time to embrace her when some of the nuns entered, and after (in the usual common-place terms of regret) expressing their surprise at the alteration so visible in the appearance of the sister Pasiphaë, they took Imogen with them to assist at matins, who immediately after the service returned home.

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CHAP. X.

I am fresh of spirit, and resolved
To meet all peril very constantly.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE day which intervened between that on which she had parted from the canoness and that on which they were finally to determine on the mode of her escape, was passed by Imogen in all that restless agitation of a mind labouring under the ever-torturing feelings of suspense; a species of suffering of all others the least supportable to such a mind as Imogen's, which, sanguine and impatient, scarcely conceived a project that fancy did not overleap probability to realize.

The lady Magdelaine, who possessed nothing of genius, but its variability, was

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constantly altering, or, as she termed it, improving, some passage of her work, which caprice rather than judgment disapproved; and Imogen was detained to a later hour than usual on the evening when for the last time she was to visit the convent of St. Dominick, and by that visit save herself from becoming its inhabitant for life.

Full of all those fears natural to her situation, she dared not ask permission to attend the convent vespers, lest suspicion should awaken at the request; for the sun had set some time before she had left the study of lady Magdelaine.

While in doubtful anxiety she stood at the casement of her apartment, and cast a longing look towards the convent's spires, Theodore, the young page, led out a mule from the postern gate beneath. "Theo-"dore," said Imogen softly, "whither "goest thou?" The page started, turned round, and replied: "To our bishop's

" castle, mademoiselle, with this packet
" from father Anselm, which is to be deli-
" vered before the morning's dawn."

" And if thy path lies near the convent
" of St. Dominick, wilt thou give me thy
" protection to its gates?"

" Will I! Oh! though it did not, how
" gladly would I go out of my way for
" the happiness of attending you!"

" Tarry then a moment," said Imogen, wrapping a large cloak round her, and creeping down softly to the postern gate, where Theodore received her. The summit of the loftiest mountain scarcely blushed to the departing radiance of the sun; over the spires of the convent the evening planet flung its steady light, while to the upturned gaze of Imogen and her young companion, on the deep blue of the atmosphere countless suns, surrounded by their attendant worlds, gradually appeared.

" What a heavenly night!" said the

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page, throwing the bridle over the mule's neck, who followed him as he walked by Imogen's side.

"Heavenly indeed!" said Imogen; and they continued to walk on in silence.

"When we consider," said Imogen, after a pause, "that each of those beautiful lights, which now appear and disappear to the eye, is a sun, and the centre of a system of worlds, we become lost, overwhelmed by the idea of His omnipotence who created them, and wonder with the royal Psalmist, 'Lord, what is man, or the son of man, that thou so regardest him!'"

"When you speak to me," said the page, "of the wondrous works of nature, you appear to me yourself at once the most beautiful, the most interesting! Oh mademoiselle! when I hear you speak thus, and when I look at you, so young, so fair—!"

"Is that the convent bell?" inter-

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rupted Imogen, confused, and for the first time sensible of the impropriety she had committed in stealing from the chateau, unknown to its lady, at such an hour, and with such a guide. "The urgency of the "circumstance only can excuse it," said Imogen, determined to proceed in silence.

"There is certainly some charm in the "instruction you convey," continued the page; "for while the little astronomy and "mathematics the father Philip had the "goodness to teach me is all forgotten as "fast as learnt, not a word, not a sentence, "you ever uttered, but I could repeat "better than my prayers; and I have "often thought, mademoiselle, that if all "teachers were like you, the world would "benefit by it more than by all the col-"leges of jesuits in the world. What a "difference between the hoarse accents "of a toothless mumbling friar, and a "voice like yours, flowing through teeth "so white and lips so beautiful!"

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"There is more gallantry than truth or "justice in your remark," said Imogen coldly; "but I prithee let us quicken our "pace, or I shall miss vespers."

"Is it true, mademoiselle, that you are "indeed to enter on your profession Sun-"day next?"

"It is so intended, I believe," said Imogen.

"Gracious God!" exclaimed the page, with a profound sigh, and continued to walk on in silence. They had now come within sight of the gates of St. Dominick, when Imogen suddenly stopt. "Hark!" said she, "how sweet that strain breathes "on the stillness of the night!"

"It must be the nuns chaunting the "evening service," said the page.

"Surely," said Imogen, "this is some-"thing more than ordinary."

They had now reached an eminence which commanded a perfect view of the convent grounds, and Imogen and her com-

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panion paused to observe the effect produced by approaching torch-light, as it flushed a red tint on the gloomy foliage of the pines and cypress that shaded the cloistral walks; while a long range of awful arches chequered with their extended shadows the broad mass of light the illumination within the body of the church flung from the stained sashes of the lofty spiral windows. The next moment a procession of friars appeared, walking two by two, and carrying lighted tapers; then followed the exorcist, the cross-bearer, and the officiating priest, heading four brothers of the order of St. Dominick, bearing on their shoulders a bier covered with a pall, which, flowing back from their shoulders, fell to the ground. Supported by two of her nuns appeared the abbess of St. Dominick as chief mourner; and the whole body of the sisterhood closed up the procession, which proceeded from the convent gate along the cloisters. The friars sung the *Miserere* till

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they approached the church; when their deep tones fading into a mournful cadence, the nuns began the *requiem* until they were all received within the body of the church, where their soft and sweet choral strain was lost amidst the organ's loud and solemn swell; and the whole impressive scene was again wrapt in the gloom of obscurity.

"How awful!" said the page; "'tis one "of the pious sisterhood going to her last "home!"

Imogen in silence and with rapidity descended the eminence; then waving her hand, and faintly uttering her thanks to Theodore, she entered the gates of the cemetery, which lay open, and glided into the church. The solemn office for the dead was just begun; and the body, placed in the centre of the aile, was surrounded by tapers.

Imogen, though scarcely able to move, crept behind the pillars, and, entering the

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choir, mingled with the nuns. Not daring to make an enquiry, and full of the prophetic fears of anxious friendship, she threw herself on her knees beside the lay sister who had attended the canoness. "So," said the sister in a whispering voice, "you are come too late; it is all over with your friend."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Imogen faintly, "then it is as I suspected."

"Yes," said the sister; "you are doubtless disappointed, for I suppose you expected something by her death; but though I had a right to whatever she might have left (for the saints are witness to the trouble I have had with her) I came off no better than yourself. With all the canoness's wondrous sense, which was perpetually taking others to pieces, every trumped-up story of distress could impose on her."

To this selfish and unfeeling harangue Imogen listened in tears and in silence:

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then, after a long pause, in a voice scarcely articulate, she demanded when the canoness died? "In something less than three "hours after you left her," returned the sister: "when I went into her cell after "matins, I found her lying on the ground "in a swoon; but she only recovered from "one fainting fit to fall into another. We "carried her into the chapel to receive "extreme unction, and she died in our "arms, almost without benefit of the "clergy, Christ preserve us! for she took "no notice of what was going forward: "she was indeed speechless from the time "you left her."

Here the office for the dead being finished, mass was celebrated; and the officiating priest having flung incense over the body, and sprinkled it with holy water, the procession proceeded to the chancel, where a grave was opened to receive all that remained of the mortality of the unfortunate Rosalie de Villette.

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As soon as the body was interred, the pious crowd retired; and Imogen, who leaned behind a pillar for support, soon found herself alone, and seating herself by the grave of the canoness, wept the death of the only friend Providence had raised to cheer her hapless destiny! Yet were her emotions, though mournful, not ungracious: it was a melancholy indulgence of that luxury of woe so profoundly to be felt by the heart of sensibility, so impossible to define. To the tender regret of friendship succeeded a train of considerations more immediately connected with self-interest. Imogen now found herself without a friend on earth, and her "tender buds "of hope" blasted in the very moment she believed the genial influence of friendship was about to rear them to maturity. She had not the faintest suspicion of the person to whose care she believed the canoness meant to consign her, and who was to have conducted her in safety to the

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lady de Rosemont; and how, helpless and unprotected as she was, she should find a mode to escape the vigilance of lady Magdelaine before three days could elapse, or travel alone through that part of the province where civil war raged with the most boundless fury, was a question unanswerable.

The deep toll of the midnight bell first awoke her attention from the train of thought that involved it, to a sense of her situation. Seated by the newly-made grave of the departed nun, on a fragment of a broken tomb-stone, with no other light than what the dying lamps in the distant ailes afforded, Imogen shuddered at the awful gloom that surrounded her: she arose and took a taper that burnt before the shrine of St. Dominick, and held it up; but its faint blue flame served but to make the darkness of the church more visible. Imogen, though reared in a convent, possessed not the shadow of super-

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tition; but *chou Night is no logician*," and the imagination of the novice, but too much alive to the impression of existing circumstances, opposed those arguments her mind suggested to her fears, and for a moment left her a prey to those vague horrors which ignorance and error are supposed only to cherish. But their influence was but momentary; she smiled away her apprehensions, and advanced towards a door which opened into the cloisters, determined to proceed to the dormitory, and take up her night's lodging in the cell of the lay sister who attended the canoness, and of whom she had yet much to ask relative to her deceased friends.

She had scarcely proceeded a few steps when, stumbling over some loose flags, she slightly hurt her foot. To prevent the return of a similar accident she took down a lamp that hung from a pillar, and holding it low, as its light flashed on the resolute pavement she observed it chequered by the ex-

tended shadow of what she supposed an image. Instinctively raising her eyes she beheld a tall figure leaning on the pedestal of a monument: Imogen started, believed it still to be a statue, and raised her lamp: the figure glided away!

Imogen clung to a pillar for support; a chill faintness seized her: she would have sunk to the earth, but that an encircling arm withheld her.

"Fear not, lady," said a voice low and mournful; "the spirit of the departed "saint thou mournest, like thy minister- "ing angel, guards the sacred vigils of "weeping friendship, and—"

Imogen heard no more; the exaggerated fears of imagination were almost wound up to frenzy; and, after a temporary insensibility to her situation, she found herself seated at the base of the monument where the figure had leaned, and the father Philip supporting her in his arms, while his lanthorn burnt by her side.

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"Merciful God! was it you, father?" said she: "could fear so have deceived "me, that I did not know your voice or "person? and yet, methought, as you "leaned against this pedestal, your figure "appeared tall beyond ordinary height."

"I lean against a pedestal? holy mother! "why thou hast had a vision, daughter," said the friar smiling; whose round, plump stature must have suffered a strange metamorphose, to have answered Imogen's description.

"Was it not you, father, who caught "me as I sunk to the earth?"

"Marry no; I found thee seated here "pale and lifeless, as I was returning to "my convent, after shriving the sister "Agnes, who is fast following the ca-"noness."

"And saw you no one?" demanded Imogen.

"None but thee," said the father; "and "truly thou didst startle me, and not a "little, daughter."

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Imogen then related the circumstance of her having loitered at the grave of her departed friend, and of the figure that met her eye and addressed her.

The father was too superstitious not to express some emotion at the detail: until the probability suggested itself, that either the solemnity and gloom of the place, in conjunction with Imogen's fears, had conjured up the phantom; or that some person, among the few of the neighbouring peasantry who were present at the funeral obsequies, had loitered behind; quieted the friar's suspicions of a supernatural intruder: and holding up his lanthorn, and perceiving the door still open by which the peasantry usually entered, he exclaimed: "'Tis as I suspected; some pious hind "was keeping his vigil at the shrine of his "patron saint, and your spectral appear-"ance scared him from his devotion."

Imogen was in no temper of mind to argue the point, however she might differ

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in opinion from the friar: who, drawing her arm through his own, conducted her to the convent, where she joined a few of the nuns, who were sitting up with a sick sister; and while the curious legend, holy fable, or wondrous tale, went round with ceaseless garrulity, the novice remained silent and thoughtful, wholly occupied with those various interesting and melancholy reflections which the death of the canoness and her own situation had awakened: nor was the mysterious stranger forgotten; the imagination of Imogen was too romantic, not to give the occurrence all the high colouring of the marvelous; and the voice and address of the incognito was of too singular and superior a nature, to induce her to coincide with father Philip. "It is all a mystery," mentally exclaimed Imogen, "and certainly a mystery con-" nected with the death of the canoness."

While she was thus occupied, the nuns turned the conversation on the death of

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the canoness: and the novice learned that a dispensation from the pope, enabling the sister Pasiphaë to remove from the convent for the recovery of her health, had been brought by two strangers of noble appearance, who seemed much afflicted at the tidings of her death, and who immediately rode away, without stopping to take the refreshments prepared for them in the refectory.

Imogen was now certain that one of those strangers was the person who addressed her; yet willing to avoid the tiresome questions and wondering curiosity of the nuns, she forbore making any mention of her adventure; and the next morning reached the chateau before her absence during the night had been noticed, while the nuns took leave of her as one from whom, in a day or two, they should part no more.

When a strong mind is thrown wholly on itself, it becomes fertile in resources.

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"I must now," said Imogen, "depend "on myself alone." This reflection gave her an ostensibility in her own estimation, she could not feel while depending on the exertions of the canoness. She had money, more than she believed she should ever have occasion for; and she had a letter to secure her a reception with madame de Rosemont; and now her first and favourite plan of eloping in the disguise of a minstrel again recurred to her mind, as the only one she could adopt. Yet even to effect this, it was requisite to have some assistance; and there was but one person to whom she could apply: that person was Theodore the page.

The modesty of her nature, and some degree of pride incident to her character, had prevented her hitherto from noticing the page by the least familiarity: she thought their situations assimilated too closely to admit of the shadow of freedom on her part; and the occasional modest

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gallantries of the young page rendered her still more diffident of admitting any on his. Their only intercourse, for two years that they had been beneath the same roof together, had been a repeated offer of little services, or oblique encomiums on his side, and of grateful refusals or modest rejections on her's. A sense of the discovery she was about to make, and the services she was about to demand, overwhelmed her with confusion, as she entered the apartment where Theodore, who had read all the romances of the age, sat absorbed in a book. On Imogen's entrance he flung it down, and rose respectfully. "I fear," said Imogen, "I have interrupted your "studies?"—"'Tis true, mademoiselle, "you have; but how much more delight- "ful is such interruption, than any pur- "suit it could interfere with!"

"Perhaps," said Imogen, "thou wert "quarrelling with thy author, and glad of "an opportunity to fling him aside."

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" Pardon me, I was much interested in " the story: 'tis of a brave and noble " knight, who rescued by his single arm " a beautiful and amiable lady from the " power of two guardians, who would " have forced her into a convent, to pos- " sess themselves of her fortune. Oh, " how happy are such knights!"

" Dost thou think so, Theodore? and " wouldst thou too volunteer in the ser- " vice of the suffering and oppressed, did " an opportunity occur?"

" Would I? would I? oh God! but " you do not, will not, know my heart."

" I think I do, Theodore; for I believe " it noble, generous, and benevolent; else " would I not repose that confidence in " thee I am now on the point of doing."

" A confidence, and in me, holy Mo- " ther! you cannot mean it?"

" Not if you refuse to receive it, Theo- " dore."

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"I refuse! I swear by all I hold dear to "consecrate my life to your service."

"Nay, my kind friend, I demand no "protestations." She then mentioned her determination of avoiding a mode of life, to which she had objections, which neither her reason or conscience could get over; her expectation of an asylum with madame de Rosemont; with every other circumstance relative to the intention she had formed.

Theodore listened to her in amazement too great for utterance. "What, made- "moiselle, you who have been always "looked up to as a saint; you who have "been always intended for a nun! 'tis "most strange, and yet most natural: "besides, whatever you think best must be "so; and oh, were you to remain here, "how delighted should I be at your deter- "mination! and when you leave the "chateau, who will care to remain in it? "Oh, did you but know how your idea

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" cheered its solitude, how often the sight
" of you passing through the antichamber
" has revived my spirits for a whole day!
" When I looked on you as a sacred being
" consecrated to God, I believed it almost
" a sin to think of you, but as one does
" of their patron saint: and then, holy
" Mother! what pains did I take to stifle
" even—But your pardon, mademoiselle,
" I would not offend you for the world.—
" You were speaking of your escape from
" the chateau. I do believe the lady Mag-
" delaine has it much at heart to make
" you a nun, whether your vocation lies
" that way or no; and it will not be easy
" to get clear of her vigilance: where
" does the lady Rosemont reside?"

Imogen drew from her bosom the letter addressed to madame de Rosemont. Theodore, reading in the superscription that her chateau lay on the skirts of Picardy, and within three leagues of the city of Soissons, suddenly exclaimed; " Nothing can be

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"more à-propos. You must know, made-
"moiselle, there lives about two leagues
"from the chateau, a widow and two sons,
"who deal largely in the frieze cloths for
"which this province is so famous; their
"chief market is at Soissons, and since
"this part of the country has been so dis-
"turbed, they carry their merchandize by
"water, and coast along the Aisne. Of
"a fine evening you could almost see the
"smoke of their chimney across the river
"from your window: they are plain, sim-
"ple, and credulous, and differ in no re-
"spect from the peasantry, except in be-
"ing somewhat more opulent. You know,
"mademoiselle, I have some skill in phar-
"macy, having culled simples and attend-
"ed the laboratory of the Cistercian bro-
"thers at St. Menhoulm, until recom-
"mended to the lady Magdelaine by fa-
"ther Anselm. The poor people think
"me skilful; and having had the good
"fortune to cure one of the widow's sons

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" of a disorder in his leg, they fancy " themselves beholden to serve me to the " utmost extent of their power. Sunday " is the day appointed for you to enter " your holy profession; Saturday is the " market of Soissons; these good people " will set out with their merchandize early " on Friday morning: I will recommend " you to their protection as a young rela- " tion of my own, going into the service of " a lady in Picardy; when you are once at " Soissons, they will easily find a mode of " conveyance for you to the chateau at " Rosemont."

The sanguine Imogen eagerly caught at this project, and thanked Theodore with tears and smiles of gratitude. " But art " thou sure, my kind friend," said she, " that these people will afford me the pro- " tection you suppose? and how will you " be able to see them between this and to- " morrow morning, when you say they set " out on their journey?"

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" Oh! easily, mademoiselle: I shall pad-
" dle the little pleasure-boat across the
" Aisne, instead of going the high road;
" by which means I shall reach their cot-
" tage in less than an hour and a half, and
" shall be back by the time my lady goes
" to supper: meanwhile pack up what-
" ever you may think necessary to take
" with you; and three hours after mid-
" night, when the moon will rise, the
" splashing of the oars beneath your win-
" dow will be the signal of departure."

" Suppose," said Imogen, after a mo-
ment's pause, and in some confusion, " I
" were to disguise myself as a minstrel;
" might not a man's garb be some protec-
" tion?"

" Doubtless, mademoiselle; neither your
" sex, face, or form, are much calculated
" to insure your safety in an adventure
" such as you are now on the point of en-
" tering; and a minstrel's garb is a pass-
" port every where: yet should you as-

"sume it, I see no necessity for your do-
"ing so until you arrive at Soissons. The
"most dangerous part of your journey
"will be the three leagues between Sois-
"sons and De Rosement: the war rages
"in Picardy; the king has invested Laon;
"and the two armies are scattered in every
"direction."

"Is the minstrel's robe still lying in his
"apartment?" asked Imogen, colouring.

"It is, mademoiselle: I will leave it in
"your room with a doublet and hose of
"my own; we are, I think, much of a
"size; the minstrel was of a lofty sta-
"ture."

"He was so," said Imogen, sighing.

"Do you think you will meet this min-
"strel, mademoiselle," said the page with a penetrating smile, "when you enter the
"world?"

"Good heavens! no, why should you
"think so?"

"May I entreat your pardon? In truth

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"I know not why I think so; but I am "certain that were it so, the minstrel "would not regret the circumstance; yet "his never returning here, with such in- "ducements,—except indeed he—"

"Theodore," interrupted Imogen, "it "were well we now parted, our long con- "ference may else excite suspicion."

"True, mademoiselle: it is selfish in me "to wish to prolong my own happiness, "at the expece of endangering yours; but "a conversation with you is so——Well, "I am gone, mademoiselle; if you loiter "here about nine o'clock this evening, I "shall have returned from the cottage of "dame Margueretta, and will meet you "here."

Theodore then set out on his little friendly expedition; and Imogen attended lady Magdelaine, as she believed and hoped, for the last time, in her study.

At the hour Theodore had appointed, Imogen found him in the antichamber; he

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had only time to tell her that he had arranged every thing with the dame Margueretta, when the lady Magdelaine's bell summoned him to the supper-room, where Imogen also adjourned, and took her seat as usual at the table.

What a heart throbbed in her bosom, during the most tedious supper she had ever sat down to! The friar, who was doing all possible justice to a very fine capon, was silently busy till the cloth was removed: when he amply made up for his taciturnity, by expatiating on the art of cookery, its rise, progress, and decline among the ancients, and its revival in the present day; inveighing against the sin of intemperance, and on the benefit resulting from spare diet; repeating some lines of Homer, descriptive of

* A noble pair of brothers, who
On nightingales of monstrous purchase din'd;

with an appropriate eulogium on the Spar-

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tan brown bread and black broth; and exclaiming against the luxuries of the table with the abstemious vehemence of an Indian brahmin, after having feasted with the voluptuous delicacy of an Apicius. At last having finished a bottle of *vin de paye*, he arose to retire; the lady Magdelaine arose at the same time.

The heart, when placed in a new situation, betrays emotions of which it believed itself incapable, until called into existence by the pressure of circumstances hitherto inexperienced. Imogen received the father's benediction with an emotion that almost tempted her to press the hand that waved over her bending head; and when she wished the lady Magdelaine good-night, she did it in a tone so full of tenderness, that the lady Magdelaine seemed to catch the infection of kindness, and, instead of her usual formal salute, returned, "God "bless you, child!" Never had her sharpest severity gone so closely to the heart of

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Imogen. "It is probable," said Imogen, as she looked after them as they proceeded by different ways to their respective apartments, "I shall never see you more." In that reflection all their former unkindness was forgotten; Imogen could recollect nothing but the pains the friar had taken with her in her studies, and the condescension with which lady Magdelaine had lately asked her opinion upon several occasions. Imogen returned to her chamber, and found the minstrel's robe, with part of the page's dress, on her bed: these she packed up with a small parcel of linen; then, seating herself at the casement, passed the remainder of the night, so pregnant with event, in a variety of conflicting and opposite reflections. The hope of emancipation from impending evils; the fears natural in an attempt so hazardous to a mind equally ignorant of enterprize and vicissitude; the sanguine expectation of success, and the dread of failure; all contributed

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to agitate the mind of Imogen, and at intervals nearly overthrew every intention, and staggered every resolve. At last the clock struck three, the moon arose from behind the spires of Saint Dominick, and Imogen heard the splashing of the oar beneath her casement: she arose, wrapt a large cloak round her, took her little parcel in one hand, a small lute in the other, as a substitute for a harp in her personification of the minstrel; and proceeded with a noiseless step and beating heart to the gallery, which opened by a glass door on the terrace, where Theodore met her. He took her parcel and lute; and drawing her arm through his, they proceeded in silence till they descended a flight of marble steps, at the foot of which the boat was moored. Theodore placed his trembling charge in it; and seating himself opposite to her, plied the oar, which sparkled with the brilliant drops of the moon-light wave. As they glided from the shore, the dark scene-

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ry of the chateau and the forest de Montmorell assumed an awful and impressive aspect. The thoughts of Imogen were wholly absorbed in their contemplation: those local attachments which a warm and affectionate heart will form even for inanimate objects, to which it has been long habituated, rushed on her mind; and in the moment of her parting them for ever, assumed an interest her heart before had never confest. Every spot, as it receded from her gaze, recollection consecrated to some novel sensation, some new-born idea, some developed thought; and the soft regret which attends a final separation from things grateful from habit, but in themselves inconsequential, mingled with the joyous emotion of liberty regained, and hopes almost ratified, which thrilled with ardent pulsation on every fibre of her heart. Then apostrophizing the sombre pile on which her gaze was fastened, she mentally exclaimed, "Alas! how many

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" weary hours and restless days have I " passed within the confines of thy gloomy " walls! There my heart has vainly " throbbed, to disclose the lively emotions " it cherished; there have my eyes vainly " cast round their hopeless glance, nor " met the look of sympathy they sought; " there reflection shed her light on my " mind only to make me conscious of the " wretchedness of my destiny, and every " new-born thought awakened but to " slumber!" Then casting her eyes towards a casement brilliantly illuminated with the moon-beams, she recollected that it was there she last beheld the minstrel; that it was there she had received those vows, which in her young heart awakened a bliss beyond all the joys she believed the scale of human felicity comprised! Even the recollection of that sweet, though illusive moment, was 'a joy past joy;' " and " though," said Imogen, " experience has " taught me it was but a rapturous dream,

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" I would not part with the emotions the " remembrance of that dream excites, for " all the sober contentment and unalloyed " satisfaction that I may yet, that I have " hitherto enjoyed. Alas! that the hap- " piest moment of life should have been " the most deceitful." Her half-articulated exclamation was accompanied by tears which coursed each other down her check.

" Ah, mademoiselle!" said the page, who had long and silently observed the varying emotions of her expressive and eloquent countenance, " it is for those only " to weep whom you have left behind you. " 'Tis certain I always knew you were to " leave us some time or other: but still " you would have remained in the neigh- " bourhood; and on a festival day, when I " attended the church of St. Dominick, " I should hear your sweet voice, and " know I was under the same roof with " you: but now, now you are free, and it " is no sin to think of you. But pardon

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"me, I would not for the world say any "thing to offend you: I always believed "you were intended for something great; "I shall never forget the horoscope cast "for you by the old astrologer, the last "day he visited the chateau. Yet I once "read in a romance, of a page who fell in "love with the very lady he served: it was "indeed audacious, but then, there is no "dictating to the heart; do you think "there is, mademoiselle?"

"I should hope so, Theodore," said Imogen with a sigh; "else wherefore "was reason bestowed on us? The best "heart is liable to become the sport of its "own impulse: and even though its pro-"pensities *individually* considered may be "consonant to virtue; yet *relatively* they "may be inimical to prudence, justice, "and the happiness of others, as well as "our own."

"'Tis very true, mademoiselle; you al-"ways speak, think, and look, like an

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" angel! We should not attach ourselves " to an object we can never possess: not " that it is wrong to love what is most " worthy of being loved; oh no! but to " encourage an inclination detrimental to " our peace, without even a *hope* of grati- " fying it, is at once sinful and childish: " is it not so, mademoiselle?"

" I fear so, Theodore," sighed Imogen; and they both remained silent till the boat put into a little harbour, that almost bathed the walls of dame Marguerette's cottage. The dawn was already breaking in the east, a faint tinge of yellow gleamed on the horizon, and the morning planet still survived the lesser lights of the firmament; while, opposed to the glowing flush of strengthening day, the moon appeared but as a luminous vapour. Moored to the bank lay a package-boat; and Theodore, steering clear of it, anchored his little bark to the stump of a decaying willow, whose drooping boughs flung their shade

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across it; then jumped on the bank, and rapped at the cottage door. A light soon appeared in the casement, and the next moment he was admitted: when he returned to Imogen he was accompanied by a middle-aged woman, habited in the peasant dress of the country, and who welcomed her in a patois dialect so broad and unintelligible, that Imogen only understood her courteous reception by the air of native kindness which accompanied it. She conducted her young and timid protegée to a small room, where two comely youths were at breakfast. Imogen and the page gratefully partook of the rural fare, pressed on them by their hosts with all the eagerness of unpolished hospitality. The meal being finished, the two young men and their mother went out to the boat; and as Imogen observed them stowing in the last parcel of their frieze merchandize, she turned to Theodore, and having thanked him in a voice scarcely articulate from emotion,

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she added: "And now, my kind friend, it "would ease my heart of its fears on your "account, lest your absence should be "discovered, did I see you row back to- "wards the chateau, whose turrets the "morning light render discernible even at "this distance."

"Ah!" said the page, brushing a tear from his cheek, "I shall be there too "soon."

"How thy kindness affects me!" said Imogen, applying her handkerchief to her eyes; "yet how I envy thee thy feelings! "for dear to a heart like thine must be "the consciousness of a benevolent ac- "tion performed for another at the risk of "injuring ourselves. Pure disinterested "humanity! this is thy blessed attribute; "and while the heart of Imogen shall "throb with life, the generosity of Theo- "dore shall live among its most grateful "recollections."

"Oh heavens, how you overpower me!

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" To succour the oppressed is an impulse
" of the heart, not an effort of the mind;
" it is a gratification, not a duty. I re-
" member it was thus you spoke, when I
" would have thanked you for clearing my
" character to lady Magdelaine, after the en-
" vious Bernardine had so grossly aspersed
" it. I remember too, when I was on the
" point of being discharged, and you
" pleaded for me with tears, and offered
" me all the money you had to send my
" mother, for that Bernardine had de-
" prived me of, and—"

" Nay, no more, I entreat no more;" interrupted Imogen, and at that moment the woman entered to tell her all was ready for their departure.

Imogen presented her hand to Theodore: he led her out in silence, placed her in the boat, fixed her parcel and lute beside her, and held the hand she presented him for more than a minute to his lips, and then, unable even to utter an adieu, leapt

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on shore. The little bark glided swiftly away. Theodore, with folded arms and watery eyes, pursued it with his gaze.

Imogen kissed the end of her veil, and waved it in the air. Theodore returned the salute with his hat; and the next moment the serpentine course of the river stole her from his view. The page then entered his little boat with a weary and desponding heart, and reached the chateau de Montmorell ere its inhabitants had awakened to the dull round of their accustomed avocations.

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CHAP. XI.

One out of sorts with fortune.

SHAKSPEARE.

Io vado—
Fuggitiva Taminga—e chi sa dove
Puo guidarmi il destin?

METASTASIO.

SWIFTER than the course of the rapid stream over which she glided, flowed the thoughts of Imogen as she pursued her voyage along the delicious shores of the Aisne. "Some natural tears she dropt, "but dried them soon;" and the timid apprehensions, the sombre doubts, that had agitated her mind, vanished before the cheering beams of hope. As the mists of twilight gradually disappeared to her eye before the rising refulgence of the sun, all "the melodies of morn" burst on her ear,

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all the awakened beauties of nature blushed on her view; and while the lowing of the herds, the wild tone of the huntsman's horn, or the warlike blast of the trumpet's shriller notes, died away among the echoes of the hills, the boat glided through a changeful scenery, over which the enthusiast fancy of the young Imogen roved with unsated delight. Mean time her female companion seemed lost in silent calculation of her expected profits, which appeared by her reckoning on her fingers: while the two boys alternately sung a hymn to the Virgin, or a ballad of Rollo; and sometimes raised their sparkling oars to point out a straggling party of the military, who held their outposts on the summit of a distant eminence, and who had come down to the skirts of an extensive orchard to regale themselves with the delicious fruit it afforded.

Imogen's fellow-travellers having provided themselves with refreshments, about

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ney, which his wishes led him to believe was now at an end.

" The family are retired to rest, I fear," said Imogen.

" We shall soon awaken them," said Robichon, taking hold of a horn that hung by a brass chain from the outer gate, and sounding a blast that seemed to shake the whole building, and was repeatedly reverberated among the surrounding hills. In a few minutes a light appeared in an upper casement of one of the towers, which was cautiously opened; and a man, holding out a lanthorn, demanded, " Who sounded at " the horn ?"

" A friend, who wants admittance," said Robichon.

" That is more easily asked than grant- " ed," returned the man.

" I pray you, good friend, inform us," said Imogen, " if this is the chateau de " Rosemont ?"

" Why, here are *two* friends instead of

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" one," said the man, " who want admit-
" tance," holding down his lanthorn;
" but what boots it to thee to know, young
" sir? These are no times to admit nightly
" wanderers. Thou hadst better not lose
" thy time parleying here, so good night!"

" We are no wanderers," said Imogen eagerly. " This youth is my guide, who
" returns when he sees me safely lodged
" within the gates of the chateau de Rose-
" mont."

" Marry, then it will be long ere he re-
" turns; but what is thy business here?"

" To deliver a letter and a packet of
" some consequence to the lady de Rose-
" mont."

" O ho! a packet of consequence!
" Well, tarry there a moment, and I will
" be with thee presently."

The casement was then closed, and the light retired.

It was near a quarter of an hour before the window was again opened. " The

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" lady de Rosemont is retired to rest," said the same voice; " but hie thee to the " postern-gate to the left of this tower, and " thou shalt obtain admittance."

" Thank heaven then!" said Imogen, " *this is* the chateau de Rosemont."

" Aye, aye, I could not be mistaken," said Robichon, leading round the horse; and by the time he had lifted her off the gate was unbarred, and a man appeared with a lanthorn. By his voice Imogen knew it was the same she had already spoken to.

Robichon gave her little parcel into the hands of the man; who, wrapped in a long dark cloak, scowled a penetrating glance at the two young strangers, and exclaimed in a surly tone to Robichon, " I have re- " ceived no orders to admit you."

" Nay," said Robichon, " and though " thou hadst it would matter nought, for " I could not tarry if I would; so spare " thy excuses, good master churl."

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Imogen drew her purse from her pocket, put a gold piece into Robichon's hand, and thanked him for his protection. Robichon would have spoken, but the man rudely pushed him out, and said, as he barred the gate, "By the mass, that fellow "has as much jabber as an old woman."

He then proceeded, followed by Imogen, through a spacious court surrounded by a parapet wall, and entered a large folding gate, which he barred after him, as he had done the former. Imogen found herself in a large Gothic hall, at the further end of which an expiring fire sent forth a transitory flame. Her conductor (whom she supposed to be the porter) raked up the dying embers, and drew a stool for her to be seated. While he was thus employed she stole a timid glance at his countenance, whose natural expression of ferocity was only tempered by the lines of cunning and duplicity which marked it; and as the brightening embers cast a red tint on his

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off in a path which lay to the west of Soissons.

Although the sun had set some minutes before they left the door of the cabaret, a flood of crimson light bathed the horizon, reflected on every object a deep red tint, and gave to scenes of changeful variety, through which the travellers passed, that warm glow of colouring which so eminently characterizes the animated landscapes of Claude Loraine, until the last sweet solemn hour of

" Grey-hooded even,
" Like a sad votarist in palmer's weeds,
" Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' car;"

and as the obscurity of twilight veiled in gradual oblivion those picturesque and varying objects which had interested her taste or given play to her imagination, Imogen's thoughts revolved wholly on herself, and the reception she would meet with

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from the lady de Rosemont; and a thousand timid fears insinuated themselves into a heart too anxious to please not to be doubtful of success, and which had sketched the reception of her new protectress under a thousand aspects that alternately animated her hopes or strengthened her apprehensions. "How much," thought Imogen, "will the good madame de Rosemont be "shocked, when at the same moment she "will receive her friend's letter and an "account of her death! Surely the sense "of affliction in ourselves can be scarcely "more dreadful than that of awakening "it in another. It is entering a family "under very gloomy auspices, to be first "known to it as the bearer of melancholy tidings."

"I hope, mademoiselle," said Robichon, as he jogged on with undeviating pace, "that you are not afraid."

"Afraid, good Robichon! of what?"

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said Imogen; who now first observed the loneliness of their path, which lay through a wild and desolate heath.

"Of what! nay, I know not, made-
"moiselle; but one would as soon not
"travel at this dead hour of the night if
"one could help it. Somehow, although
"I defy the devil and all his works, I never
"care to go the length of myself when
"once the sun sets behind our mountains:
"albeit our father Francisco gave me a
"charm against evil spirits; see, made-
"moiselle, here it is, enclosed in this little
"reliquary, which was my great-grand-
"father's; 'tis but a little of the sand
"scraped off the golden cockle-shell of
"St. Michael, yet I warrant of marvelous
"great power."

"I fear no evil spirits," said Imogen, casting round a timid glance; "and
"heaven, I trust, will protect us from
"mortal enemies."

"Now I'll be sworn, mademoiselle, an'

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" I would rather meet a troop of arque-
" busiers, with their short fusees, long
" rapiers, and murdering faces, than one
" single spirit. Holy St. Michael! what
" is that standing near the ruins of yon-
" der watch-tower? The whole army of
" blessed martyrs take us into their care!"

" In good sooth," said Imogen, recovering from momentary horror, " thou " frightenest me: I see nothing near the " watch-tower but a withered tree. Come, " banish thy fears, and I will tell thee a " pleasant tale for thy amusement; 'tis " the wondrous tragedy of the Green Lady " and the Dwarf of the Hills."

" Do so, mademoiselle; it gladdens my " very heart to hear a marvelous pleasant " tale, and never did I hear a story of a dwarf " that was not full of cunning device."

" Well then, first tell me how far may " we be from de Rosemont?"

" A league from the watch-tower, " which in former times belonged to the

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" seigneurie of de Rosemont. I know " every step of the road as well as my " beads. Before the troubles broke out " in Picardy we carried our merchandize " into the neighbourhood of the chateau. " But I prithee, demoiselle, let us have " thy pleasant story."

" Well then, Robichon, mend thy pace, " and thus we begin: It was about the " reign of Louis the Twelfth,—"

" He was a saint, mademoiselle, was he " not?" said Robichon, crossing himself devoutly.

" Not by the calendar," said Imogen smiling; " but he was the father of his " people. It was in his reign that an an- " cient castle stood at the foot of mount " Cenis."

" My grand-dam has a story that begins " just so," said Robichon; " only that in- " stead of mount Cenis 'tis the Vauge " mountains. But I cry you mercy; pro- " ceed, mademoiselle."

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" This castle was the residence of a " lady, who—Do you not hear the distant " sound of horses' feet?"

" Methinks I do," said Robichon; " yet I see nothing. We are not very far " from the forest of Folambray, of which " there is a dreadful story of a white steed. " The story runs thus: It was—"

" Merciful God!" said Imogen; " if " the forest should be a shelter for ban- " ditti!"

" Lord help the lady! the whole king- " dom is a shelter for them; for go which " way you will, you are sure of being " murdered and plundered into the bar- " gain."

At that moment, by the light of the coruscations which flashed in the atmosphere, Imogen perceived a band of horsemen descend from the opposite hill. She could scarcely articulate, " Fly, or we are " lost!" while Robichon, equally intimidated, turned off the high road, and gal-

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loped with the utmost speed down a narrow alley, impenetrable from the gloom of the trees which shaded it. They had gone more than half a league before Robichon checked his horse; then listening for a moment, and hearing no sound but the melancholy groans of the forest agitated by the gusts of rising wind, he exclaimed, breathlessly and still trembling, "Well, "mademoiselle, I believe we have dis- "tanced them for this time; and by the "length of way we have gone, I wot we "cannot be far from the chateau."— "But you seem to forget, Robichon," said the still agitated Imogen, "that, "though we have gone a considerable "distance, we have taken a road directly "opposite to that which led to de Rose- "mont."

"*Ventre Dieu!* I never thought of that; "but there are so many little zig-zag ways "about these forests, which the peasants "cut for themselves, that I doubt not this

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" same path will lead to the chateau; and " I am much mistaken if those are not its " turrets rising to the left."

" We are certainly near a chateau," said Imogen, whose heart bounded at the conviction; " but whether it be the cha- " teau de Rosemont,—"

" It can be no other," said Robichon.

Less than a quarter of an hour's ride brought them before the portals of the chateau. It was a vast and frowning edifice, flanked on all sides by lofty round towers, and involved in an air of melancholy gloom, which the solemnity and darkness of midnight heightened almost to desolation.

" Are you certain that this is the chateau " de Rosemont?" demanded Imogen, while a chillness crept through her veins as she contemplated this great and sombre structure of feudal power.

" Morally certain," replied Robichon, alighting, and heartily weary of his jour-

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noon they landed, and spread their simple repast beneath the shelter of a rock, whose high and overhanging points were shaded with pine and elder, amidst whose interwoven branches the vertical beams of the meridian sun played without incommoding the travellers. Over the hours of social enjoyment care holds no jurisdiction. The old woman ceased to calculate, and was loquaciously gay; while the young men, more alive to the beauties of a face a large hat (now thrown on one side) no longer concealed, collected the choicest wild flowers the spot afforded, and presented them as a tribute of homage to the charms of their lovely fellow-traveller: while the young heart of Imogen, ever ready to expand its affectionate powers to the least influence of kindness, entered with interest into the village politics and domestic tales of the dame and her sons, though with difficulty understood; and catching up their dialect, with all the most happy

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powers of imitation which she so pre-eminently possessed, repeated (as they continued their voyage) several legends, and sung some provincial ballads, which she accompanied on her lute.

That witchcraft which lurked in the manners of their fair companion stole insensibly on the hearts of the simple peasants; the evening unobserved fled on with hasty strides, and the last gleam of the setting sun illuminated the high tops of the forest of Folambray, which appeared, at the distance it was observed, like a dark cloud tinged with living gold, as the spires of Soissons rose on their view. Within half a league of the city they landed at a little *cabaret*, where they were to put up for the night.

It was a matter of some debate with Imogen and her new friends, whether she would set off that evening to the chateau de Rosemont, with Robichon, the younger of the boys, on horseback, or wait till the

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following morning, and hire a guide at the cabaret; for Robichon would be under the necessity of attending the market with his mother by dawn the next day. Extreme impatience to arrive at the end of her journey, and her reluctance to trust herself to a strange guide, or remain longer at the cabaret, now thronged with rude and riotous people, who put up with their merchandise for the night, induced her to adopt the former plan, to which Theodore had strongly advised her; and though her host of the cabaret assured her the road to the chateau de Rosemont was neither dangerous nor frequented, yet she thought it advisable to adopt the disguise with which she had furnished herself, as more appropriate to her expedition than the light and singular habit of a novice of St. Dominick.

Having expressed her intention to her female protectress, who highly approved of it, while Robichon got the horse ready,

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Imogen exchanged her dress for that of a minstrel; while modesty trembled at the mandate necessity imposed, and blushed "celestial rosy red" in contemplating a transformation which was to secure the sensitive feelings of delicacy from a still greater violation.

As soon as she was dressed, she presented two pieces of gold to the dame Marguerette, influenced rather by the suggestion of her generosity than her prudence in the donation: for amidst the thanks with which the dame overwhelmed her lurked surprise, curiosity, and suspicion; and she now for the first time became importunate in her enquiries and hints, which Imogen to avoid seemed not to understand. Robichon now led a horse to the door, for the hire of which Imogen had paid. Imogen flung the string of her lute over her shoulder; and, being placed on horseback behind Robichon, she bid adieu to dame Marguerette and her eldest son, and struck

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olive complexion, and his scowling eye rolled on the young stranger in silent but penetrating observation, awed even into horror, she timidly withdrew hers; then cast a trembling look round the vast gloom that surrounded her, and sunk almost lifeless on the stool.

"And is your business with the lady "de Rosemont so pressing that you must "see her to-night?" asked her companion, looking keenly under her hat.

"I should indeed wish it," said Imogen, whose heart revived from its transitory terrors at the sound of madame de Rosemont's name; "yet I should be sorry to "disturb her if she has retired to rest."

"Oh, for that, she has been in bed "these three hours; but give me your "packets, and I will have them delivered "to her."

"Pardon me," said Imogen; "I was "desired to deliver them into no hands "but madame de Rosemont's."

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" Is that the case? well, madame shall " be informed of your arrival." He then took his lanthorn and walked away.

Imogen, who followed with her eye his tall lean figure as it glided along the passages, saw him ascend a flight of stairs; and, when he disappeared, heard two doors, one more distant than the other, clap after him. A thousand vague fears and suspicions took possession of her imagination; which, alive to every impression, was but too liable to exaggerate every evil, as it exalted every good. Yet when after a few minutes absence the man returned, and informed her the lady de Rosemont was ready to receive her, her fears dissipated, and she arose to follow him, with all the sanguine ardour of lively expectation springing from the bosom of gloomy doubt. Having ascended the stairs, passed along a coridor, and entered a suite of rooms, which, vast, gloomy, and cold, betrayed every vestige of decay and desolation, they

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reached a door which terminated the suite. Her guide then looked round, and, with a smile of indescribable expression, said, "Come, young sir, prepare your creden- "tials;" and opening the door, desired her to walk in. Imogen had scarcely entered the threshold, when, observing the impenetrable darkness of the apartment, she started back; but the guide, pushing her forward, with a savage laugh, closed the door, and locked it on the outside. Imogen, actuated only by the impulse of terror, shrieked, and attempted to force the bolt; but, overcome by her fruitless endeavours, sunk to the earth; while the footsteps of her conductor echoed on her ear till they at last died away into distance.

It was now the conviction fully flashed on her mind that she was not in the chateau de Rosemont; but that the simple Robichon had been deceived by the darkness of the night and his own impatience to re-

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turn; and that it was probable she was now in the power of a band of outlaws or midnight murderers, who had found an asylum amidst the ruins of this vast and desolated edifice. The emotions which this belief awakened were indescribable.

As soon as her eye was familiarized in some degree to the obscurity in which she was involved, she observed the apartment, like the rest through which she had passed, was lofty and spacious; and though the moon had not risen, the misty light of a cloudless firmament was admitted by a high spiral casement, and reflected on a range of black marble pillars which ran along one side of the apartment. Though without even a hope of escaping, Imogen arose, and, as well as her trembling limbs could support her, examined the walls of her prison; when her hand fell on a lock, which without much exertion turned, a door opened, and she found herself in what she supposed was an armoury, by the war-

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like accoutrements which hung round it, and on which the rising moon now cast her beams. From this observation her eye was attracted by a glimmering light which shone at a distance. Faint with terror, yet emboldened by despair, she advanced, and found it was a fracture in the floor, which admitted a light from some apartment beneath. She bent down her eye, and plainly perceived through the aperture the ruffian who had admitted her into the chateau dozing over a blazing fire, with a tankard and a pair of pistols on a table beside him. At that moment a horn sounded; he started, and, taking up a light, hurried out.

In a few minutes he returned, followed by a party of men armed with cutlasses and pistols; and amidst the general confusion of their voices, Imogen could only at intervals hear enough of their conversation to lead her to suppose they were the party she and Robichon had escaped, and

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that they had returned unsuccessful after the expedition of the night.

"What, no booty!" said her ferocious acquaintance; "mass! an' I would not "do more sitting over my tankard here "than the whole of you put together on "the king's high road in the darkest "night, why let me never rob a rich priest "or proud financier while my name is "Bertrand."

Here the party all spoke together, and Imogen could only distinguish the voice of Bertrand, in reply, say: "Why, I caught "the bird just at the door of my cage."

"Is he worth murdering?" asked the gloomiest villain of the tribe.

"Nay, as he seems a right delicate "dainty youth, we will do the matter "genteely; invite him to supper, and "poison him," said Bertrand. "He wears "the disguise of a minstrel, and is charged "with a packet of importance to the lady "de Rosemont, who resides in the neigh-

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" bourhood; which I would have forced " from him, but I could not read them; " and he has a purse of gold."

" Which thou wouldst have taken, but " that thou darest not oppose thyself singly " to a stripling," said the gloomy villain, snatching up a pistol in one hand, and a light in the other; adding, " but you know " me of old to be less tenacious. Where " is the stranger? if he escape the cha- " teau we are lost: dead men tell no " tales."

" Nay, start fair," cried the whole party vociferously; and headed by Bertrand they all rushed out.

Imogen heard no more: the pangs of death were already on her, yet total insensibility was denied her. The murmur of voices again resounded through the vaulted apartments she had herself passed through; the faint echo of steps became gradually louder; she heard the lock of the outer apartment turn; and a sudden

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uproar of voices assailed her ears. Terror was wound up to its last strained pitch of agony and distraction. Nature could not sustain the conflict, and Imogen sunk lifeless to the earth.

From a state of temporary death she recovered, under all the horrors that had produced it, *shaken* almost to dissolution. She raised her eyes in the dreadful belief of meeting those of the murderers, and scarcely credited the testimony of her senses when she found herself still alone; while the confused murmur of a distant uproar poured like the noise of a raging torrent on her ear, and the light which flashed through the casements shed a brilliant illumination in the apartment. The confusion of her senses rendered her doubtful of their fidelity; and, after a successful attempt to collect her scattered thoughts, she arose and approached the casements, from whence she beheld the court below filled with armed men, some bearing

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torches, others struggling with the ruffian inhabitants of the chateau, and others binding them in manacles, tying them on horseback, or dragging them to light from the secret coverts whither they had fled.—Several shots were fired, and the groans of the wounded were not the least audible among the various and terrifying sounds which reached the ear of the trembling and amazed spectatress. It was during the contemplation of this scene of universal confusion and horror that a thought of emancipation insinuated itself into the beating heart of the trembling captive. Hope flattered her in the belief that the contest, which continued with unabating fury in the front of the chateau, would favour her escape by the rear; and she recollected that the windows of the apartment in which she had been first confined had a different aspect from those of the armoury. She returned thither, and to her inexpressible delight found that the door was open.

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Without encumbering herself with her lute, which lay on the ground from her first entering the room, she was hurrying away; when the gigantic form of a fierce arquebusier, holding a drawn sword in one hand, a torch in the other, appeared at the door. Imogen shrieked and reeled: the stranger let fall his sword and grasped her by the shoulder. Imogen fell at his feet, and could only faintly utter, "Mercy!"

"Mercy!" repeated the soldier; "yes, "as much mercy as your companions will "find, you shall have: as much mercy as "they have lately shewn to some of our "officers, you may expect."

"Alas!" said Imogen, "I am not their "companion, but their prisoner. I have "not been two hours within the walls of "the chateau, and have reason to believe "that I owe my life to the arrival of those "strangers whom I beheld in the court "below engaged in contest with those "who meditated my death."

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The soldier looked at her for some time, then at her lute, which lay beside her, and exclaimed: "What then, you are one of "those cunning musicians, who get into "our camps and cause desertion amongst "our men? Mass! it would be a good "deed to—" He paused, and looked ferociously at her, as if more bent on revenge than tenacious of its object. Imogen, almost wholly overcome, could only faintly say, "Save me, enable me to escape, and "all I possess shall be yours."

"All you possess!" said the soldier with a loud laugh. "What, you will give me "that instrument there I suppose? well, "that is generous! Why, what the plague, "did the villains throw away powder and "shot upon such a poor little unfledged "bird as thou? *Ventre Dieu!* thou art "not worth the plucking!"

Imogen then drew her purse from her pocket; and, taking out the diamond ring given her by Pasiphaë, she presented all

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the purse contained to the soldier, who looked for a moment in utter astonishment at the purse, then at the ring, and then at her. "What," said he, "only this for "saving your life! Oh, you narrow-heart-"ed unconscionable little villain! And "what am I to have for procuring you "your liberty into the bargain?"

"I have nothing more," said Imogen despondingly.

"By St. Catherine, then if you count "that ring *nothing*, you may as well give "it me."

"Impossible!" said Imogen; "'tis the "gift of a deceased friend."

"Yes, yes," said the man, "a *deceased* "one, I warrant; you took care of that. "But I have no time to spare; my com-"rades will be up directly: this ring and "purse will condemn you, notwithstanding "your disguise and your fine story; and you "will have the pleasure of accompany-"ing your confederates to the *wheel* to-

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"morrow. Aye, here they are, and "now—"

Imogen, trembling and dismayed, gave her ring; and the man, who feared lest his rich booty should be discovered and claimed by his associates, made her take her lute, hurried along the gallery, and, descending a flight of steps, opened a postern gate and pushed her out.

Life preserved and liberty regained left on the heart of Imogen but two predominant sentiments: joy for her unexpected deliverance, and gratitude to Providence for the protection it had afforded her. The *world was now all before her*, but not "*where to choose;*" for the darkness which hovers on the atmosphere between the flight of night and the dawn of morning prevented her the power of election. Guided rather by her ear than her eye, she only avoided that direction where the still existing uproar marked the place of action, and fled from positive danger without any

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thought of finding even probable safety. By degrees, as she walked on with as much rapidity as the fatigue and emotion she had endured would permit, the murmur of savage contest and brutal ferocity died away; and a silence, profound as the darkness which accompanied it, reigned on every side. So favourable is the heart to every species of social impression, that Imogen, as she proceeded alone in silence and in darkness, scarcely able to discern the path in which she wandered, almost regretted those terrifying but *human* sounds which had broken on the deathlike stillness of solitude even to desolation; for after she had passed the woodland which skirted the chateau, no tree, no shrub, flung its dark outline on the unvaried gloom of the heath she traversed. Weak, trembling, and cheerless, she glided on for near half a league: till, weary beyond the power of proceeding, she seated herself on a bank beneath the umbrage of the first tree she met; and,

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laying her lute by her side, determined to wait till the morning dawn should discover some human habitation, whose inhabitants could guide her to the chateau de Rosemont.

The veil of night seemed at last gradually withdrawn, and the landscape, though imperfect to the view, slowly unfolded its boldest features, and betrayed its minuter charms. The sober impression of dawn still diffused its chaste and reserved tints on the horizon; and the colouring of the east, as yet doubtful, by degrees assumed a richer and more determinate glow: the last shadow of darkness faded on the west; and dawn, awakening from repose, shed her deep blushes on every object: nature reflected back the rosy influence, and, invigorated for action, poured forth with genial liberality tears that nourished, sighs that inspired, and beams that gave a new existence to creation.

The renovated soul of the young wan-

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derer sent up its effusions to heaven, with the mists which arose from the bosom of nature, like a fragrant incense from the altar of grateful piety; and appeared (as, refreshed and inspirited, she gazed from her solitary seat on the rising sun) like the violet which sprung wild and forlorn at her feet, scenting every gale with its odour, and raising its drooping head bathed in dew to the genial influence of every sunbeam. Imogen could not help assimilating herself to the flower; and, placing the modest blossom in her bosom, whose state of solitary desolation so strongly resembled her own, she arose, threw the string of her lute over her shoulder, and ascended an eminence which commanded an extensive view. The breeze, as it lifted the clouds from the valleys, discovered a scene rich and beautiful beyond the powers of delineation. On one side, the turrets of the chateau she had so recently left rose on the hazy mists of distance; while on the other

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the high road wound round the base of a hill, on whose summit the purple vapours of the morning dawn still hovered.

To the road Imogen descended, as the safest and most direct she could take; and having refreshed herself at a clear stream which murmured near the pathway, she continued to wander on, till, observing a small column of smoke staining the atmosphere, and something rising through the trees like a chimney, she quickened her pace, and soon arrived before a cottage which partly lay in ashes, while the smoke still ascended from its ruins, and evident traces of desolation (the grass burnt up and the pasturage destroyed) were visible on every side. Imogen paused in silent and pitying contemplation of the scene before her, when something like a human form crept from among the ruins: it wore a female habit, and bent beneath the burthen of a few dried sticks. Without appearing much surprised at the fair stranger's ap-

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pearance, who gazed on her with horror and compassion, she said, with an air of affliction, pointing to the ruins, "That is "a sorry sight!"

"Sorry indeed!" said Imogen.

"This is all the benefit we derive from "civil war," added the woman.

"This was not then an accidental fire?" demanded Imogen.

"No, no!" said the woman wildly; "I had one son fighting for the king and "the other for the League: two fine "youths! What business had they to "meddle with party? They were happy "and laborious, and dear to each other; "but their brotherly love turned to deadly "hatred, and—see, stranger! that wither-"ed spot is stained with the blood of my "younger son, drawn by his elder brother, "because he refused to change his reli-"gion and his party!"

An expression of agony even beyond distraction invested the haggard counte-

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nance of the narrator; and then she added, "The fellow-soldiers of my deceased "son murdered my first-born; in my arms "murdered him; and consumed his corse "with this dwelling. But hush! be secret, "and I will shew you the spot where I "have collected his precious ashes apart "from those of the ruins: oh, trust the "mother's heart for that! Come, come!" she cried in a deep tone, and offering her hand to Imogen with an impatient air; then with the wild, heart-piercing shriek of distraction, she exclaimed: "See! see! "'tis my boy!" and plunged amidst the ruins, pursuing the phantom of her own disordered imagination and broken heart.

Imogen now first perceived that she had been conversing with a maniac. Struck with horror by the discovery, and filled with the tenderest compassion for the sufferings of the unhappy and distracted mother, she fled the spot where the still sensible heart of the lunatic bled over the

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ashes of her murdered child; and pursued her way, lost in those reflections her melancholy adventure had given rise to.

"In tracing," said she, "the historic "register of calamities which in every age "warfare, whether foreign or domestic, "has brought upon the human species, "the eye dwells only upon general and "public facts; for the historian is but the "recorder of battles and sieges, of victory "or defeat: but the tale of woe with which "the private sufferings of the individual "could wring the heart, steals into eternal "oblivion with the cruelties and oppression "that caused them."

As Imogen proceeded, every step presented some vestige of recent desolation; and the road she had taken seemed totally unfrequented, although she observed the glittering of arms on the summit of a distant hill. While the timid traveller was ost in doubt whether to proceed or turn down a road that presented itself, a peasant

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overtook her. Though almost bending beneath a load he carried on his shoulder, he addressed her with a smiling countenance and a courteous air. Imogen's heart bounded to the grateful accents of courtesy, and she returned his salute with all the kindness it was made.

" It is a charming morning," said the peasant, " and *mort de ma vie*, the sun " looks so gay, and the air is so sweet, and " every thing so smiling, that it must be " a heart *diablement lugubre* that does not " smile too. For my part, when the sun " shines, I cannot choose but be happy: " yet, marry, with no great reason either; " 'tis but a week since my little cottage " was first plundered by one party of the " soldiery and then burnt by the other. " But then our *grand monarque* won a " battle the same day, so my wife and I " made a *feu de joie* with the ruins of our " cottage. The next day we removed a " little lower down the country, built a

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" hut on the banks of the clearest stream
" in the world, and with some little mat-
" ter we saved from the ruin of our farm,
" have not as yet wanted the *de quoi vivre.*
" And you, monsieur, I suppose, are going
" to try your luck at the camp, which lies
" before Laon, some leagues off. I once
" played a little on the viol and tabor my-
" self, until the steward of our seigneur
" caught me one day playing when I
" should have been at work, and broke
" the viol over my head; and so I never
" had the heart to play again."

Imogen, delighted with the *naïveté* of her companion, and pleased with the gay philosophy of his character, so truly French, felt that his voluntary detail of his domestic circumstances called for reciprocity of confidence: and entered, though with reservation, into the adventures of the late eventful night; throwing as much of " the " doublet and hose into her disposition" as might enable her to fill up, without

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awakening suspicion, the character she had assumed, and from which she believed she had already derived more protection than the habit of the timid novice could have insured.

"So," said the peasant, "I suppose you "were going to look for a situation in the "chateau de Rosemont, and had the good "fortune to get admittance into the cha- "teau *Noir*, the most noted nest for ban- "ditti in the province? It was but two "days back they fell upon two officers of "the royal army, and murdered them in "the forest of Tolambray. A party of "the soldiers have been lying in wait for "them ever since, and surprised them "last night just as they had returned from "an expedition. This morning before "dawn I met the whole party."

"Then the soldiers were victorious?" said Imogen.

"They took the villains, to a man," said the peasant.

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Imogen, who dared not mention the money which she had been plundered of by the soldier, lest it should excite the suspicion of her companion, was now determined to pursue her way to the chateau de Rosemont, and enquired from the peasant the nearest road.

"Lord help thee!" said he; "why "thou art going from it as fast as thou "canst. But thou seemest weary, poor "soul! and, marry, thou dost not look as "if thou couldst bear much fatigue; "therefore thou hadst better tarry at our "hut and refresh thyself awhile, and then "thou wilt be better able to continue thy "journey."

"I am indeed young at the profession," said Imogen colouring, "and as yet little "inured to fatigue; besides, I have suf-"fered much anxiety since yester even: I "will therefore accept thy hospitable offer "with gratitude."

"Why, that is well said," exclaimed the

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peasant: "and look! yonder rises the smoke "of our hut, just above the little cop- "pice to the left. You must know, I have "been on the skirts of the forest all night, "cutting wood, which I sell at the next "market town; there is some hazard in "doing it, but necessity has no law, and one "cannot stand by and see their children "starve: aye, here they are, dear little "souls! many a long look-out they have "had since dawn for me, I warrant." While he spoke, two lovely boys and a little girl ran towards him; he laid down his burthen to kiss and give them his blessing, which he did with an air of patriarchal tenderness and piety. The two boys then dragged the parcel of wood after them by the leather thong which bound it; while the little girl, gazing timidly on the stranger, fastened round her father's neck, who carried her home in his arms.

At the door of the hut they were met by a young woman, whose sun-burnt but-

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expressive face was lit up with joy and affection, as she took her daughter from her husband's arms to fill them with herself: "Dearest Baptiste," said she, wiping away the tear with which she had bedewed his cheek, as she pressed it to her own; "I "am so happy you are returned! I have "not closed an eye all night, for how "could I sleep and know you were ex-"posed to danger? The dame Jacinthe "too was here just after you left me, and "told me such a tale of the robbers of "Chateau Noir!"

"Plague take the dame and her croak-"ing!" said Baptiste: "had I not your "prayers, and the prayers of my little "ones, my sweet Josephine? that is the "husband's and the father's shield: but "see! I have brought thee a guest."

Josephine now first beheld the young and timid stranger; who, modestly retreating behind her kind host, contemplated in silent rapture the first scene of social and

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domestic felicity she had ever beheld. It was to Imogen a festival of the feelings; and the tear that glittered in her eye, the smile that dimpled her cheek, betrayed a heart formed to feel and to *enjoy* that bliss it throbbed with delight only to *observe*.

Josephine, with blushing courtesy, welcomed her interesting guest: while the children, with playful surprize, touched the strings of her lute, then retreated; then, lured back by the stranger's supplicating smiles, hung on her dress, or sported in her arms. The grateful mother checked their familiarity with a look of tender reprehension: while Imogen, delighted with their little freedoms, loaded them with caresses; and, gay and innocent as themselves, displayed a playfulness infantine as their own.

When Josephine had prepared their noontide repast, the little groupe circled round a table laid beneath the spreading branches of an elder on the banks of the

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stream Baptiste had boasted of, and spread with such coarse and simple fare as the unviciated palate of nature, stimulated by a long-unsatisfied appetite, only could relish. When it was concluded, grace was pronounced by the master of the simple feast with a devotional energy, which shewed it not the result of habitual ceremony, but the pious effusion of existing and grateful feelings. The young minstrel then tuned her lute, and repayed the hospitable courtesies of her hosts with several popular ballads and tender vaudevilles:* many of them the impulsive effusion of genius, appropriate to the scene of rural and domestic felicity the songstress then witnessed; and all calculated to harmonize with the simple taste of her auditors, and the native gaiety of the French heart. At

* La vaudeville appartient exclusivement aux Francois; et ils en ont de très piquantes, et de très plaisantes. *Dictionnaire de Musique, par J. J. Rousseau.*

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last, at the request of her delighted hosts, she struck up a villanelle, the then prevailing rustic dance of the French peasant; and Baptiste, unable to resist the magic influence of the sportive strain, sprung on his feet, and, with a boy in each hand, performed a spontaneous ballet, with a dexterous and spirited hilarity, that might almost compensate for the deficiency of grace and method with which it was executed; while Josephine took her reel, gazed with pleased satisfaction at the performance, and sung at intervals a couplet adapted to the air. Every pulse in the gay heart of Imogen throbbed in sweet vibration to the vivacious strain her flying fingers produced; and when she cast round her eyes, and beheld the frugal remnants of the coarse meal industry had provided for the necessaries of nature; the clay-built hut, which scarcely excluded "the "penalties of Adam, the season's changes;" and the ragged drapery of wretchedness, which scarcely veiled the weather-in-

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jured forms of laborious poverty; yet beheld in every countenance that surrounded her, those beams of joy the heart only emanates, whose bright irradiation dispelled the pensive gloom adversity hangs upon the brow of its victim; the glowing tints of pleasure flushing the cheek recent oppression had stained with a tear, and gaiety unrestrained animating those limbs to frolic exercise, which but a moment before bent beneath the hard-earned burthen labour had procured for the suppliance of indigence and distress.

"Such is thy power, oh sweet affection "of the heart!" sighed Imogen: "oppressed by tyranny, despoiled by the licentious rapine of warfare, driven to the "last outline of misery, to herd with the "beast of the field and bird of the air; "still while the heart can turn and drown "its sufferings in domestic joy; while the "endearments of social life lisp their soft "comforts to the ear of the sufferer, and

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" every tie of tenderness and love twined
" round the soul, administers an ameliorat-
" ing charm, to sooth it sorrows; the ar-
" row of adversity drops stingless, and des-
" pondency smiles away her woes on the
" bosom of domestic felicity."

The thoughts of Imogen then reverted to the convent of St. Dominick; she shuddered, and blessed the liberty she had regained, though every step of its progressive attainment had been marked by the track of danger.

The children, now weary with their sportive play, threw themselves into their mother's arms; and Baptiste, taking up his hatchet, advised his young guest to take some repose, and wait till the sun declined before he recommenced his journey, went to work himself; while Josephine, gratefully thanking him for the amusement he had afforded her little family, spread with her own hands some dried leaves freshly gathered within their hut, on which Imogen

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flung herself with a sensation more grateful than she had ever felt before: for she had taken no rest for the two preceding nights, and soon fell into a profound and tranquil sleep.

On the pillow of innocence the spirit of repose loves to prolong his balmy influence, and struggles with nature to protract his empire; and the eye which anxiety has sullied with a tear, gladly closes the heavy lid, and shuts out the intrusive beam that wakes it to new care. The sun had already passed the meridional line, and faintly sketched the shadow of the hills on the plain below; when the children of Baptiste, thrumming on her lute, roused her from her leafy bed. Sweet had been the dream of her rest, for it was a dream of love; and the busy agency of imagination had lured her to the banks of the Durance, where fancy twined the flowery band with which affection wreathed the polished brow of the minstrel of Provence; the dew which

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bathed its leaves was a tear of the soul, and the gale that perfumed them a sigh from the heart: the visioned minstrel touched a shadowy lyre, and while the soul of passion floated on every dying note, the blue dissolving eye-beam of Imogen mingled with the minstrel's burning glance.

The strain of love still faded on her ear, when she awoke and recognized the tones of her own lute: her dream's soft trance had diffused a delicious emotion through her whole frame; and while memory dwelt on the fanciful rapture, a tear hung upon the languishing smile which played round her lip, that it was indeed but fanciful, and haply never, never to be realized!

At the door of the hut, while the children fondled round her, she was met by Josephine and Baptiste; they were both anxious she should remain with them that night, but having learnt that the chateau de Rosemont was but *four hours* walk from

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their hut, and hoping to reach it by sunset, she gratefully declined their offer: and having thanked them in all the warm effusions of a heart alive to every delicate minutia of the most refined gratitude, she promised they should hear shortly from her; and that as soon as she should have obtained any interest with the lady of the castle, it should be exerted in their favour, while she blushed to confess she could make them no other return for their kindness. For Imogen, despoiled of her little treasures by the arquebusier, possessed nothing but the picture of the chevalier enclosed in the letter of Pasiphaë, and the small agate cross which had never left her bosom since the day she had been received at the convent of St. Dominick: then having embraced the children, and kissed the hand of Josephine with the well-affected gallantry of a young cavalier, she proceeded on her little journey, accompanied for about half a league by Baptiste,

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who, pointing to the forest of Folambray, desired her to take the path which wound round its skirts, and that from an eminence to the left of the road she would see the turrets of the chateau de Rosemont, which would guide her for the rest of her journey. He then shook her kindly by the hand, and wishing that they might shortly meet again, left her to pursue her solitary journey.

The mind of Imogen had been as much cheered by the sweet visitant of her blissful dream, as her frame was refreshed and invigorated by repose. The sun rode high in the horizon, and spread the rich influence of his mellow tints on the landscape. The mountain breeze cooled the sultry glow of the hour, and gave spirit to health, strength to motion, and fragrance to the sense of the traveller; who, supported by a long white staff presented to her by Baptiste, and with her lute flung over her shoulder, lightly bounded on. Locomotion is ever favour-

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able to the reflective powers; air, exercise, and diversity of objects, awaken the pulse of thought to its liveliest throb; and many a weary step is sweetly beguiled of its tedious length, by those blossoms the finger of fancy strews over it.

Imogen wandered on in that sweet inebriety of the feelings and the senses, which the freshness, the variety, and splendid beauty of every thing around her contributed to awaken. Sometimes, as reflection led, she opposed the childless misery of the maniac mother, from whose bosom the horrors of fanaticism and party had torn every human comfort, to the domestic felicity of Baptiste's charming family; who, though suffering from the same baleful cause, had still rescued from the rifling hand of cruel and licentious rapacity, those sweet blossoms of affection's growth, without which the heart is but a desert and desolate void. "Alas!" thought Imogen, "that the in-"genuity of man, wantoning in the va-

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" riety and extent of its powers, should " so frequently, and so successfully, exert " its influence to pervert the best blessings " of Providence! Was it for this the God " of goodness gave us hearts to love, " minds to feel, and sympathy to attract " the tender affections of the soul to its " kindred soul?" Then the gay caprice of imagination stole on the sober disquisition of the little moralist, and the soft recollection of her dream gave to her contemplation

" The vision'd picture
" Of Fancy 'tranc'd in bliss."

From these gay luxuriant dreams of a still enamoured heart, Imogen awoke to the recollection of the object of her journey; and now first discovered that, lost in the indulgence of " the idle visions of her " brain," she had wandered from the beaten track pointed out to her by Baptiste, and had left the eminence she should have as-

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cended a considerable distance to the left: vexed at her inattention, and already something weary, she turned back, and after a walk of near half an hour, found herself at the foot of the eminence, which, steep and rugged, she with some difficulty ascended. The sun was setting, and irradiated with its crimson beams the scene which expanded in gay luxuriancy beneath; the extensive forest of Folambray spread to the north-west to a considerable distance; the summit of its lofty trees, tinged with gold, and waving to the evening breeze, appeared like the undulating waves of the ocean, receiving on their dark green heads the fading beams of the west; while the casements of the chateau, which arose on the left, were brilliantly illuminated with the reflection of the setting sun, that sunk in the horizon as Imogen descended the eminence, and struck into the path described by Baptiste as winding round the skirts of the forest, and leading to the chateau de Rosemont.

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The impatience of the weary traveller increased with every step, as the shadows lengthened on her path, and the sober drapery of evening hung its misty wreaths on every object: the dusky accompaniments of twilight already invested the lately glowing scene; the lustre of nature was veiled, and the eye of the wanderer dwelled on the repose of her charms which breathed silence and solemnity. Although this was the hour that ever spoke a soft and impassioned language to her heart, yet that heart no longer acknowledged the sweet impression; while her fears increased with every deepening shadow of darkness. Her step was no longer the loitering pace of pausing rapture or delusive thought, but rapid, almost to flight, and interrupted only by breathless fatigue: it was perhaps this singular rapidity which attracted the notice of a body of horsemen, who struck into the path she had taken, and with loud imprecation called to her to stop. Imogen,

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whose imaginary fears were wound up to real terror that banished all presence of mind, plunged into the forest, instead of obviating suspicion by voluntarily exposing herself to the scrutiny of observation.

But Imogen, who fled, not from the hope that flight could ensure safety, but from the impulse of apprehension, soon found herself overtaken by two of the horsemen: one of them alighting seized her roughly by the shoulder, and looking earnestly at her, exclaimed, "*Ventre St. Gris!* a right dainty youth, a rare musician too, I warrant: but you seem a little weary, monsieur; I will therefore spare you the trouble of another race, and provide you with a more expeditious mode of travelling." Then raising the faint and unresisting Imogen in his arms, whom fear and amazement deprived of the power of speech, he placed her on horseback behind his companion, a Spanish arquebusier; and strapping her on to the

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waist of his surly associate, who cast round a terrific glance, he mounted his horse and they joined the rest of the party.

" Well, Guy," exclaimed one of them, " what have you shot flying ?"

" A dainty nightingale," said Guy, as they rode on, " who would have found his " way to our camp to delight our men " with his minstrelsy ; like the other gen- " tleman musician who slipt through our " fingers at the siege of Rouenne, a trusty " spy, or I am no soldier."

" Nay, then," replied the other, " he " stands acquitted ; for if he is no more " a spy, than thou art a soldier,——"

" Why, how now, Armande?" said Guy: " why dost thou ever come over me thus " with thy jests ?"

" *Mort de ma vie!* if it were as easy to " come over thee in jest, as to overcome " thee in earnest, monsieur bluster, thou " wouldest not be worth the breaking a " gibe on," said Armande.

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"Come, come, Armande," cried another, "a truce with your grape-shot wit; "and let us have the story you told us, on "the foraging-party last night, of the king "who came, in the disguise of a minstrel, "to the enemy's camp: marry, it pleased "me hugely!"

"Perhaps," said Armande, "this young "cavalier would rather hear the pleasant "and tragical ditty of the young man "whom we hanged for a spy, during our "campaign in Normandy."

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed Guy, "I "hear the neighing of a steed, and sure I "see a distant light; blessed rosary! there "goes a dreadful story of a ghost in ar-"mour, mounted on a white steed, meet-"ing one of our kings in this same forest, "and——"

"To think how a man's fears will run "away with his wits!" said Armande; "truly, monsieur Guy, thou art a rare "fellow, with thy ghost in armour, not to

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"see that we are within a few paces of "the vidette guard."

Here they came up with the vidette, and having stopped for a few moments to break some coarse jokes with their fellow-soldiers, who were going to their out-posts for the night, they continued their route until the lights of the camp broke on the darkness of the night, and they arrived at the piquet guard.

"*Qui vive?*" demanded the sentinel. "*Vive la ligue!*" replied the foremost; "advance and give the parole." "*Louise* "*de Guise.*" The soldier then advanced, and whispered the counter-sign; and the whole party were suffered to pass on to the camp, whose midnight stillness was only interrupted by the clanking of the armourers, the neighing of steeds, the frequent '*Qui vive?*' of the sentinels, and the faint burst of conviviality which proceeded from the tents of the officers, near which they passed.

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Those scenes, so novel and so striking, would have interested the mind, and pleased the picturesque fancy of Imogen, had she been a spectatress under any other circumstances; but wholly overcome by the situation in which she found herself, the danger to which she was exposed, and the fatigue she had undergone; every faculty was blunted, and her mind acknowledged no sentiment, no emotion, but what terror and amazement awakened; while amidst the confusion of her ideas she with difficulty learnt, by the conversation of her guards, that she was brought a prisoner to the rebel camp.

The party stopped before the tent where the first quarter-guard of the night was stationed. "What hast thou got here?" said the sentinel, who paraded before the tent. "A swan," said Bertrand, "whose "dying notes you may hear at the provot "to-morrow, if you please. Who is the "captain of the guard for the night?"

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" The count St. Dorval."

" It strikes me," said Bertrand in a low voice, " we have picked up a prisoner of " consequence: I will deliver him into the " count's hands; my back still smarts for " the escape of the young baron whom " we picked up in the same way. Where " is the count?"

" Within the tent, at supper with some " few of his officers."

Bertrand, who had the command of the party, alighted, and entered the tent: in a few minutes he returned, ordered two of the soldiers to unbind the prisoner and assist him to dismount. Guarded on either side, and preceded by Bertrand, the trembling Imogen was led, or rather dragged, into the guard-room; while round a table, well furnished with lights and wine, circled a groupe of officers, who all turned round to gaze at the prisoner, as, drooping disconsolately timid, she endeavoured to collect her thoughts, and enable herself to

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clear up the mystery of her appearance, without discovering more of her story than might lead to her liberation.

" Where didst thou pick up this young " musician, serjeant?" demanded the youngest of the groupe.

" On the skirts of the forest of Folam- " bray, so please you, where it is said the " king regaled himself * but yesterday " with some of his officers. I thought " this minstrel might have been of the " party; and as he seemed inclined to " take the road towards our camp, I did " him the kindness to save him the trou- " ble of walking, monsieur."

" A little more matter of fact, and less

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* Henry IV. during the siege of Laon, went to dine in the forest of Folambray, where he had often been regaled, when a boy, with fruit and milk and new cheese, and in visiting which he promised himself great pleasure.

Mém. du Duc de Sully. ii. 381.

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" jocularity;" said the commanding officer.

" Nay, monseigneur," said Bertrand, " I have nothing more to relate; we have " not laid a hand on the prisoner, except " indeed to disencumber him of this in- " strument, and under favour must refer " you to himself for further information."

Such a variety of interrogation from every side followed this assertion, uttered by some with all the rudeness of inebriety, and by others with a spirit of savage raillery that sported wantonly with the feelings of its object, that Imogen, unable to articulate, and overwhelmed by the influence of her strong and various emotions, involuntarily clung to the shoulder of one of her guards, and trembled with a violence that attracted the compassionate regards of the count St. Dorval. Rising from the head of the table, he advanced towards the prisoner; and having mildly

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checked the unmeaning curiosity of the young officers, he addressed her.

"Whoe'er thou art," said he, "or "whate'er thy intentions, young stranger, "the silence you seem obstinately to ob- "serve, will avail thee nought; the laws "of war are sacred, and you are doubtless "no stranger to the penalty annexed to "their violation. Our cause has already "suffered from the successful artifice of "the enemy's vigilant spies; and though "that delicate and trembling frame seems "ill calculated for perilous adventure, it "is evident that that disguise veils no "common wearer."

"Nor shall it avail thee ought," said a young ensign, throwing off the hat which concealed her face, and confined a profusion of long tresses, that now fell luxuriantly round a neck, whose dazzling whiteness was no longer veiled; for another, more inhumanly daring than the first, rudely tore open the collar of her robe, in at-

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tempting to drag her forward to the light, and the ruff which shaded her neck fell with it. It was at that moment the woman's delicacy surmounted the woman's weakness: Imogen cast round an eager look, that seemed to demand a glance of sympathy, of protection. The eye of the count de St. Dorval only answered it; and the trembling prisoner, with a sudden effort of strength, sprung from her guard's rude grasp, and fell at the feet of one, in whose venerable countenance shone the protecting benignity of heaven itself. "Save me," exclaimed Imogen, "and—" what she would have added died on her trembling lip; but the uplifted, supplicating eye of distress, wept tears that spoke.

A moment of general amazement and consternation ensued; all crowded round the prostrate prisoner, and every eye beamed admiration and surprize; admiration at her charms, surprize that she was still prostrate: for while with hands folded

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on her throbbing bosom, she knelt faint and speechless at the feet of the protector the intuition of sympathy had elected; the count de St. Dorval hung over her in silence: his arms, outstretched to receive the suppliant, were stiffened in the attitude of wonder, surpassing the transitory emotion of common-place surprize; the eye that shed a mild compassion on the fugitive, suddenly changed its expression to the ardent gaze, whose thrilling glances beamed with soul, and swam in tears; and a faint ejaculation escaped the quivering lip that would have uttered the accents of beneficence and encouragement. Then, with a long-drawn sigh, he seemed to shake off the strong influence of emotion, and bending over Imogen, raised her tenderly in his arms; and, placing her on a chair, held with a trembling hand a glass of water to her lips. More revived by the affectionate though silent benevolence of his manner, than the refreshing beverage he adminis-

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tered, Imogen looked gratefully and expressively in his face; and, replying to the eloquence of that look, he said: "Cheer "thee, cheer thee, sweet lady; whatever "may have been the motive which led "thee to adopt this disguise, and to incur "the perils of adventure, in times themselves so perilous, thou hast nothing "now to fear from the indignant insults "of unfeeling ignorance, invested with "temporary power to bear down upon the "unfortunate: 'tis the count St. Dorval, "who pledges himself to be true to the "voluntary confidence you have honoured him with."

"Well said, count!" exclaimed one of the officers, unreproved at his commander's oblique reproach.

"*Ventre Dieu*, *monseigneur*, you are a "fortunate man!" added another: "and "I would rather be invested with such a "command, than be made generalissimo "to the whole army."

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"Gentlemen," said the count firmly, "these are idle insinuations. To the "commander in chief I stand account-"able for the prisoner; to God and my "own conscience for her safety in the "most unlimited sense: what right we "have to detain her must be a matter of "future investigation; but while that de-"tention exists, the gallantry of knight-"hood forbid we should not all consider "ourselves as bound to render her every "succour! Come, lady, suffer me to con-"duct you to my tent, where you can re-"pose at least in safety."

The count, with an air of paternal free-dom, drew the arm of the still bewildered Imogen through his own: and, while the officers drew back abashed, led her to his tent, which lay but a few paces from that of the quarter-guard. It was a spacious and elegant pavilion, and divided into three apartments, in the first of which the count's squire and page were playing at

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chess; to the last the count, followed by a page with lights, conducted his guest.

"This apartment," said the count, with a faint smile, "is to be your prison for "to-night: I myself will be at once your "servant and your guard. Meanwhile "reckon on the exertions of a friend in "your favour, who trusts he will not prove "himself unworthy of your election: "with enemies, who wear such looks as "thine, we wage no war; and whatever "motive may have lured thee to the dan-"gerous precincts of a camp, that protec-"tion thy youth and sex demands, shall "attend thee hence and guard thee there." The count then, without waiting to receive the acknowledgments which hovered on the lips of Imogen, recommended to her to take that repose her evident weariness de-manded, and retired.

The count had left the apartment but a few minutes, and Imogen was indulging the copious flow of those sweet tears which,

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stream from the heart in the moment of safety received from the grasp of peril; of gratitude awakening to the touch of unexpected benevolence; when a page entered the apartment with those necessary refreshments her exhausted nature required. Having swallowed some bread and wine, she dismissed the attendant, and her *full* heart made its offering to heaven for the comparative safety she enjoyed; and all its grateful emotions pointed towards the friend it had raised for her in the hour of danger and distress. If the benevolent, though melancholy expression of St. Dorval's countenance, his venerable and interesting aspect, had won her confidence in the first moment that her eye had met his, every word he uttered, every glance he emanated: and even the soft sadness that hung upon his faint smile, confirmed the intuitive dictates of her sympathy; and she scarcely regretted the perilous adventure which had made her known to one,

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in whose looks of benignity and sweetness her hopes faintly traced future acts of kindness and friendship.

From the character of a spy, a supposition which excited a smile to his cool and unbiassed apprehension, she could easily vindicate herself; and to his protecting kindness she should at last owe her safe arrival at the chateau de Rosemont. - The sanguine expectations of unpractised youth receive with eager susceptibility the warm impression of its wishes; the faintest beam of sympathy is adequate to illume the fading lamp of hope; and fancy darts athwart those probable obstacles, prudence shrinks from encountering.

At last, overcome by the bodily and mental fatigue she had endured, Imogendeposited on the table the packet she had so successfully concealed in her bosom; and, without divesting herself of an article of her dress, threw herself on a couch that filled a corner of the apartment.

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A deep sleep soon stole on the perturbation of her senses; it was the profound repose of innocence long torn from its "*calm* "*mood*," by anxiety and fatigue; and the dream of her rest still gave to her imagination the image of him, to whose benevolence and compassion she owed its enjoyment.

END OF VOL. I.

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